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Deities and Devotion in Mongolian Buddhist Art

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Images on these pages are to scale; actual size of sculpture lower left is 29.2 cm tall, (see entry p. 130), and buddha amulet to far right is 5.7 cm tall, (see entry p. 3).





























Deities and Devotion in Mongolian Buddhist Art

August 30 – December 14, 2019

The Kruizenga Art Museum

at Hope College

Catalog entries by Charles Mason

Photography by Andrew Near

Bhurkumkuta, see entry p. 139.









Introduction

Tantric Buddhism—also called Vajrayana Buddhism—is a form of Buddhism that uses sacred incantations, secret gestures, sophisticated meditation and visualization techniques, and complex devotional rituals to help adherents progress toward a state of spiritual enlightenment. Many tantric worship practices are directed toward specific deities that embody either positive qualities the practitioners are trying to cultivate (for example, wisdom, compassion, and loving kindness), or negative qualities they are trying to eliminate (for example, anger, jealousy, and greed) within themselves.

Deities to whom these personalized worship practices are directed are called *yidam*, a term that is often translated into English as “meditational deity.” Most deities in the Tantric Buddhist pantheon can function as meditational deities, in addition to their other roles as protectors, benefactors, healers and teachers. A tantric practitioner’s engagement with a meditational deity is intimate and often very intense. The ultimate goal of meditational deity worship is to meld the practitioner’s mind with the enlightened mind of the deity so as to gain insight into the true nature of reality. Such engagement requires great commitment and is traditionally undertaken only with guidance and instruction from a qualified teacher.

Art plays an important role in Tantric Buddhist practice, helping adherents to imagine the deities they are invoking and providing them with a material way of connecting to those deities. Works of art are also used to teach key aspects of Tantric Buddhist doctrine and history, and can sometimes function further as talismans to provide protection or bring good fortune to their owners.

Tantric Buddhism has been the dominant form of Buddhism in Mongolia since the 16th century and all of the artworks featured in this exhibition reflect the Mongolian Tantric Buddhist tradition. Most of the artworks displayed here date from the 19th and early 20th centuries, when Tantric Buddhist culture was at its highest point in Mongolia. Many of the paintings, sculptures and other objects illustrated and discussed here were used in devotional rituals—including meditational deity rituals—by both ordained clerics and lay believers. The artworks are grouped according to the traditional schemes for classifying different types of deities and other religious subjects.

Deities and Devotion in Mongolian Buddhist Art was organized by the staff of the Kruizenga Art Museum. The museum is immensely grateful to David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton for donating and lending most of the artworks featured in the exhibition. The museum also thanks Dr. Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, who donated funds to purchase additional artworks for the exhibition; Garrett Fixx ‘20, the museum’s spring 2019 John H. Dryfhout ’64 Intern who helped design the exhibition and prepare the artworks for display; and Tom Wagner ’84, who designed and produced the accompanying exhibition catalog.

Section One: Buddhas

The term Buddha means “Enlightened One.” The epithet most commonly refers to Siddhartha Gautama, also called Shakyamuni, an Indian prince turned holy man who lived in the late 6th to mid-5th century BCE. Shakyamuni’s biography says that as a young nobleman he enjoyed a life of unrestrained indulgence. At age twenty, however, his first encounters with sickness, old age and death caused him to reject his luxurious existence and pursue a life of asceticism and self-denial. When asceticism failed to bring him spiritual comfort, Shakyamuni engaged in a period of prolonged meditation, which led him to the realization of what he called the Four Noble Truths: that life is full of suffering; that the cause of suffering is desire; that the way to end suffering is to end desire; and that the way to end desire is to follow the Eightfold Path and lead a life of moderation, integrity and compassion.

Although Shakyamuni is revered as the principal Buddha of our age, Buddhist doctrine recognizes the existence of numerous other buddhas apart from Shakyamuni. Among the most important of these other buddas are the five Celestial Buddhas, who embody different aspects of perfect buddhahood. By following the path laid out by Shakyamuni and all other buddhas, adherents of Buddhism may overcome spiritual and mental obstacles and achieve a state of enlightenment (*bodhi*) that is innate in every person. When a person achieves enlightenment, he or she is released from the cosmic laws of cause and effect (*karma*) and at death enters a state of bliss beyond all suffering and desire (*nirvana*). Achieving enlightenment is difficult and can take many lifetimes, but Buddhists believe that the teachings of the Buddha will ultimately bring salvation to every sentient being.







Shakyamuni Buddha Calling the Earth to Witness His Enlightenment

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 12.1 x 10.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.330

Tradition says that when Shakyamuni was on the cusp of achieving enlightenment, the demon Mara tried to distract him with doubts and temptations. By remaining steadfast in his meditation, Shakyamuni gained a true understanding of existence that became the basis for all of his subsequent teachings. When the frustrated Mara mockingly asked Shakyamuni who would bear witness to his enlightenment, Shakyamuni calmly touched the ground in front of him and the Earth itself responded, “I am his witness.”

Because the Buddhist faith began with the moment of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment, the earth-touching story appears frequently in all traditions of Buddhist art. This painting follows a common iconographic formula for the subject, depicting Shakyamuni sitting cross-legged on a lotus-form pad wearing a monk’s robes. His left hand rests in his lap holding an alms bowl to signify his renunciation of worldly possessions, while his right hand touches the ground in front of him to signify his enlightenment. His skin radiates a golden light to signify the absolute purity of his body, mind and speech, and he is surrounded by an auspicious, rainbow-colored mandorla.

The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with five Sanskrit characters written in red ink. The five characters—*oṃ āh hūm svā hā*—constitute a mantra, or sacred phrase, that focuses a believer’s attention in meditation and promotes spiritual development. Mantras were often written on the back of Mongolian Buddhist paintings to consecrate the images and empower them for use in ritual practices. References:

Meinert (2011), pp. 94-101 and 110-111;
Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 62-63;
Lang and Bauer (2013), p. 39.

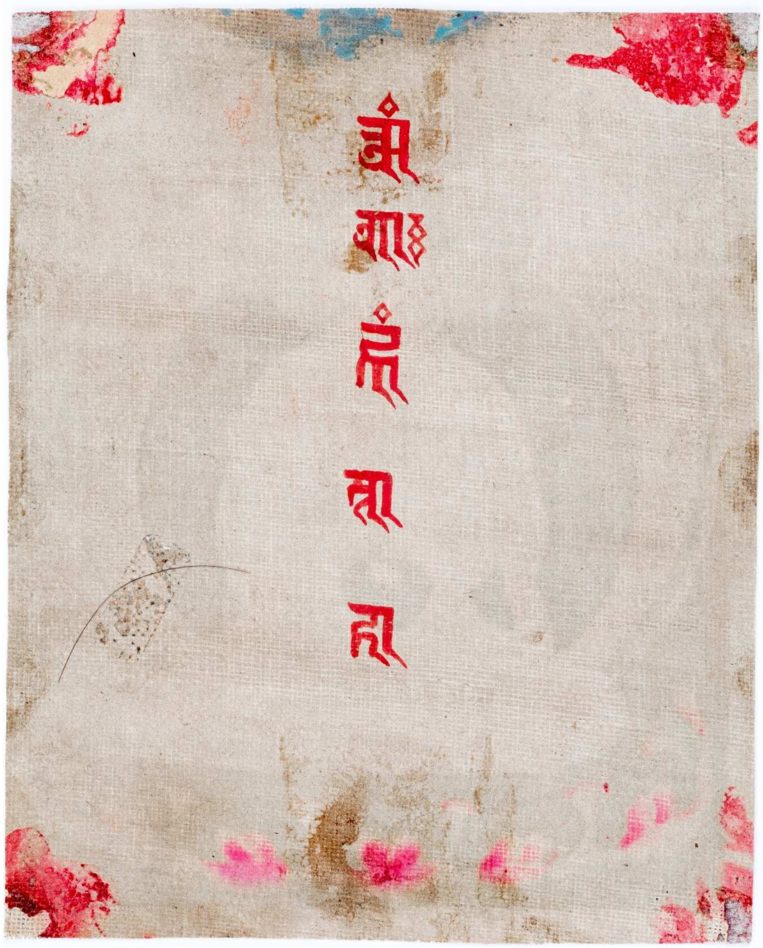


Image at right shows reverse of painting at actual size.







Previous, p. 5 and above, which is shown actual size.

Shakyamuni Buddha with His Disciples Shariputra and Maudgalyayana

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.2 x 8.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.382

After Shakyamuni Buddha achieved enlightenment, he traveled around Northern India and Nepal preaching the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. He soon attracted thousands of followers, including hundreds of men and women who took spiritual vows and became his disciples. Two of Shakyamuni's principle disciples were Shariputra and Maudgalyayana. Buddhist texts say that Shariputra and Maudgalyayana were both members of upper-caste Brahmin families who renounced their elite status to follow the Buddha and eventually achieved enlightenment under his direction. Here Shariputra and Maudgalyayana are shown standing in front of an enthroned Shakyamuni Buddha, wearing monks' robes, and carrying monks' staffs and alms bowls. A large basin on the ground between them contains offerings to the Buddha, including a cluster of three symbolic jewels, a golden wheel emblem, and a pair of ivory tusks. The back of the painting is inscribed with three identical consecration mantras, indicating that it may once have been used as a devotional object by a Mongolian Buddhist monk or lay person. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 36-47; Meinert (2011), pp. 94-97.

Shakyamuni Buddha with His Disciples and Mahakala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 7 x 5.7 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.363

The "Three Jewels of Buddhism" are the Buddha (Shakyamuni), the Dharma (the Buddha's teachings) and the Sangha (the community of monks, nuns and lay people who follow the Buddha's teachings). This painting of Shakyamuni Buddha accompanied by his disciples and the fearsome dharma-protector Mahakala is a symbolic representation of the Three Jewels. Although it is compositionally similar to the previous image, the quality of the painting is not as refined. Most Mongolian devotional paintings were produced by artistic workshops associated with major temple complexes. These workshops were staffed by artists possessing a wide range of skill levels, from masters to apprentices. Although the workshops undoubtedly strove to maintain an even level of production, inevitably some paintings were artistically better than others. A painting's artistic quality had no impact on its spiritual effectiveness, however, and even fairly crude paintings could be used for devotional purposes, as long as the images were sincerely made and followed the correct iconographic and iconometric requirements. Reference: Fleming (2011), p. 22.



Previous, p. 6 and above, which is shown actual size.

Amitabha Buddha

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 13 x 11.4 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.343

Amitabha Buddha is one of the five Celestial Buddhas of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. He is the embodiment of compassion and responds to the prayers of people in distress from his home in the heavenly Western Paradise (*Sukhāvatī*). Amitabha's physical attributes are similar to those of Shakyamuni: he sits cross-legged on a lotus throne wearing a monk's robes and holding an alms bowl to signify his renunciation of worldly ways; his head is crowned with a mystical top-knot (*ushnisha*) to signify his great wisdom; his earlobes are elongated to signify his ability to hear the pleas of those in distress; and his hands and feet are marked with wheel symbols to signify his complete embodiment of Shakyamuni's teachings. The primary visual characteristic that distinguishes Amitabha Buddha from Shakyamuni is his deep red skin color. The surface of this painting shows patchy brown stains from an adhesive that was once used to secure it inside a wooden or metal frame. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 116-133; Meinert (2011), pp. 322-329.











Amitayus Buddha with Ushnishavijaya and White Tara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; gilt copper and glass case. 10.2 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.349

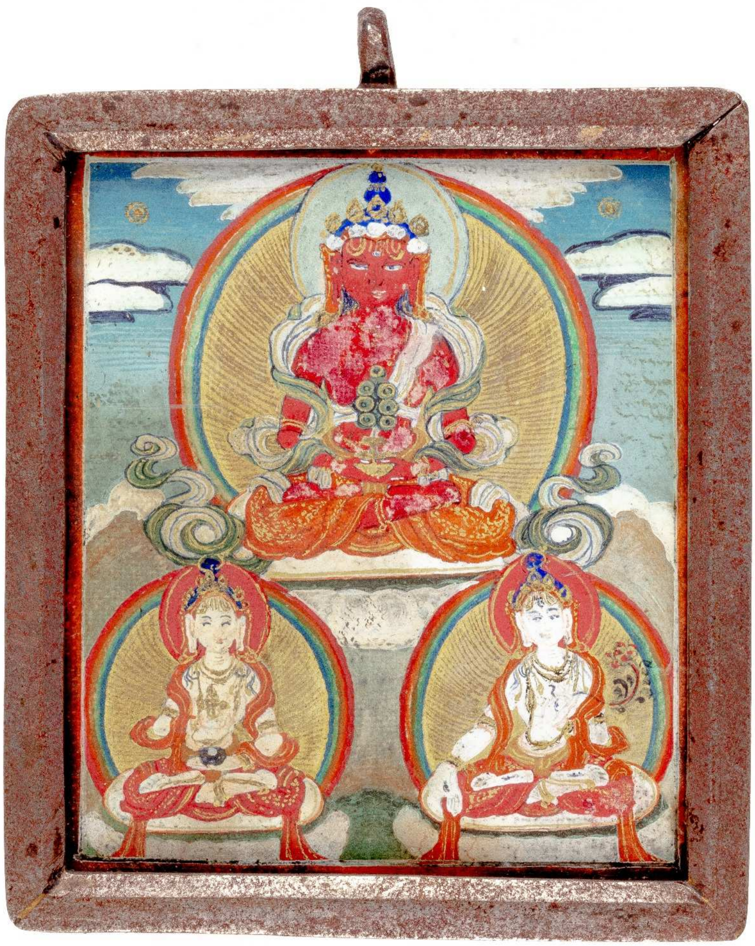
Early Mahayana Buddhist texts identify Amitayus Buddha as a manifestation of Amitabha Buddha, but over time Amitayus gradually came to be recognized as a buddha in his own right. Titled the Lord of Infinite Life, Amitayus is invoked by devotees seeking good health and longevity. In Mongolian Buddhist painting, Amitayus is frequently depicted together with two bodhisattvas, Ushnishajivaya and White Tara, who are also believed to confer good health and long life on those who pray to them. The reverse of this painting is inscribed with a three-syllable consecration mantra. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 620-625 and 644-653; Meinert (2011), pp. 330-334; Mullin and Watt (2003), pp. 98-110.

Caption page 11 and facing page.

Amitayus Buddha with Two White Taras
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; iron and glass case. 7.3 x 6.3 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.352

Like Amitabha Buddha, Amitayus Buddha is often portrayed with red skin. This painting depicts him sitting cross-legged in a meditation pose with an urn containing an elixir of longevity in his lap. He wears a colorful *dhoti* skirt and scarf, and his head and body are adorned with gold jewelry. This image is somewhat unusual in that the customary figure of Ushnishavijaya in the lower left corner is replaced by a second manifestation of the bodhisattva Tara holding a medicine jar in her lap. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with a three-syllable consecration mantra.

Caption page 12 and to right.









Akshobhya Buddha

Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 30.5 x 24.1 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.1

As lord of the heavenly Eastern Paradise, the Celestial Akshobhya Buddha is often regarded as a counterpart to Amitabha Buddha in the Western Paradise. Akshobhya Buddha is said to have begun his existence as a monk who vowed never to feel anger or resentment toward others. When he achieved enlightenment, the monk became Akshobhya Buddha, the embodiment of the eternal, unmovable mind. The chief identifying characteristics of Akshobhya Buddha are his blue skin and the vajra scepter he holds in his lap. His blue skin signifies that the tranquility of his mind is as deep as the ocean and as limitless as the sky. The vajra scepter signifies the indestructability and irresistibility of his resolve to live out the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. This painting would originally have been mounted as a scroll and displayed as a devotional or meditational image within a Mongolian Buddhist temple or monastery. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 134-141; Meinert (2011), pp. 335-339.





Sarvavid Vairochana Buddha

Mongolian, 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 25.2 x 18.9 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.47.4

Vairochana Buddha, another of the five Celestial Buddhas, is regarded as the universal form of Shakyamuni Buddha. Sarvavid Vairochana is a specific tantric form of Vairochana who is believed by followers of the Vajrayana tradition to represent the totality of all tantric teachings. Sarvavid Vairochana has been revered as a meditational deity in Mongolian Buddhism since the 18th century. He has one head with four faces and is typically portrayed sitting cross-legged in a meditation position, holding a wheel emblem in his lap to symbolize the Buddha's teachings. His body and head are adorned with fine clothing and jewelry to signify his divine status, while his brilliant white skin signifies his pure consciousness. The vivid colors and elaborate design of this painting show strong influences from Chinese Buddhist art, indicating that it may have been produced by a workshop in what is now the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 526-533; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=141. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Bhaishajyaguru

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; steel and glass case. 6.3 x 5.7 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.321

Bhaishajyaguru is more popularly known as the Medicine Buddha. His history and attributes were first revealed by Shakyamuni Buddha in an early sutra, and were subsequently augmented by later generations of teachers and commentators. In Mongolia and many other Asian countries, Bhaishajyaguru is invoked through various meditation practices and devotional rituals for help in healing physical, mental and spiritual illnesses. Bhaishajyaguru is usually portrayed with dark blue skin, sitting cross-legged with one hand in his lap holding an alms bowl or medicine jar, and the other hand extended in front him holding a stalk of the myrobalan plant, which is said to cure all illnesses. The broad face and shoulders evident in this Medicine Buddha are typical of Mongolian Buddhist figure painting. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 142-147; Meinert (2011), pp. 340-341.



Eight Medicine Buddhas with Yaksha and Two Lamas
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 11.1 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.333

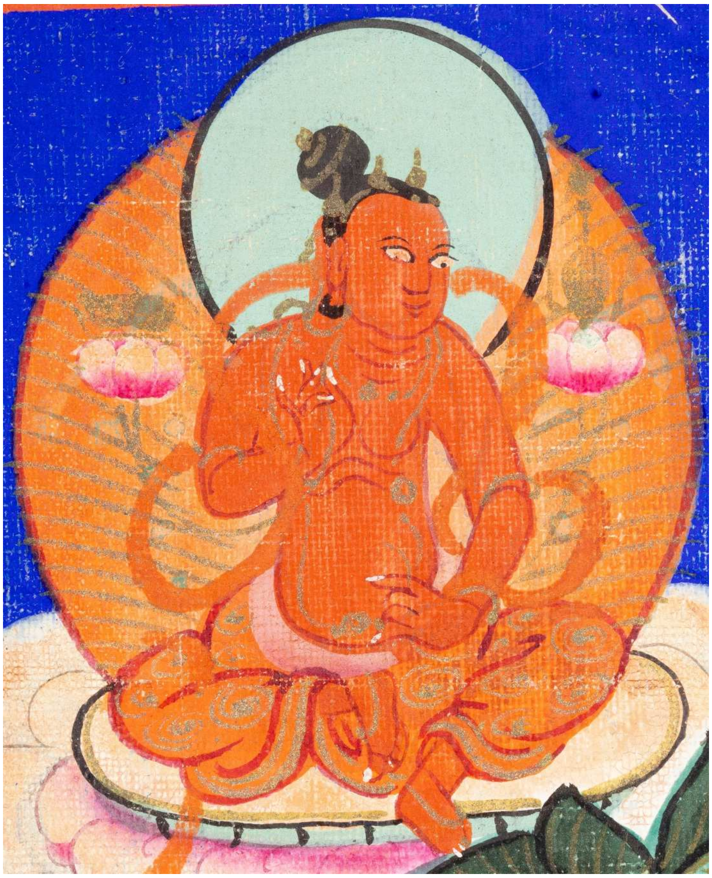
In an early sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha revealed that there are eight manifestations of the Medicine Buddha, each with his own healing powers. This painting portrays Bhaishajyaguru sitting in the center of the image with the remaining seven Medicine Buddhas sitting around him in an arc. The fierce-looking, blue-skinned figure standing below Bhaishajyaguru is Shanglon Dorje Dudul, a wrathful yaksha—or nature spirit—who guards the medicine tantras. The seated figure in the upper left corner of the painting is the monk Tsongkhapa, who founded the Gelug order that is dominant in Mongolia. The figure in the upper right corner is another Gelug lama, perhaps the Fourth Panchen Lama who first introduced worship of Bhaishajyaguru into Mongolia in the late 16th century, and who created a Medicine Buddha ritual that was traditionally performed in Mongolian temples on the eighth day of every lunar month to alleviate all suffering caused by sickness. The reverse of this painting is inscribed with the standard five-syllable consecration mantra. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 148-149; Meinert (2011), pp. 340-341.

Eight Medicine Buddhas
Mongolian, late 19th-early 20th century. Woodblock print. 41.9 x 31.1 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.328.3

Because woodblock prints were relatively easy and inexpensive to produce, they were an affordable alternative to paintings for many Mongolian Buddhist monks and lay people. This print portrays Bhaishajyaguru sitting on an elevated throne in a lush garden surrounded by the other seven Medicine Buddhas. A table set with offerings of flowers and fruits is positioned in front of the buddhas, who are flanked by the bodhisattvas Suryaprabha and Candraprabha. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 150-151.













Nageshvararaja

Mongolian, late 19th-early 20th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 29.8 x 23.5 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.2.1

Nageshvararaja is portrayed here with a blue body and white face, sitting cross-legged in a meditation position with his hands held in front of him in a gesture signifying supreme enlightenment. Seven multi-colored serpents appear in the halo around his head and on the lotus pad beneath his body. The small figure directly above Nageshvararaja is the Indian sage Nagarjuna, whose iconographic attributes often resemble those of Nageshvararaja. The four figures seated on the ground around Nageshvararaja are snake spirits (*nagas*) appearing in human form. Nageshvararaja is an esoteric buddha who was traditionally revered as a meditational deity in Mongolia. He is sometimes also included among the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession, whose existence and attributes were elaborated by the monk Tsongkhapa in the 14th century. Prayers to the Buddhas of Confession were traditionally offered at Mongolian Buddhist temples and monasteries during monthly rituals in which the monks confessed to any violations of their spiritual vows. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 126-127 and 134-135.

Previous, pages 25-26.

Jowo Rinpoche

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 11.1 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.327

Jowo Rinpoche, literally meaning “Precious Lord,” is the name of a famous sculpture housed in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, Tibet. The sculpture is a larger-than-life depiction of Shakyamuni Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment. It is said to have been made in India, and brought to Tibet by a Chinese princess in the 7th century CE. It is considered one of the holiest artworks in Tibet and has been a Buddhist pilgrimage destination for more than one thousand years. This painting depicts the figure of Jowo Rinpoche dressed in princely clothing and jewelry, seated on a dragon throne with an offering table placed before him. Copies of the Jowo Rinpoche sculpture were brought to Mongolia during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is possible that this painting of Jowo Rinpoche was made for a Mongolian monk or lay person to use in personal devotions. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with three five-syllable consecration mantras. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 128-129.

Facing page.



Section Two: Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattvas are spiritually advanced beings who have taken a vow to help others attain enlightenment before they themselves take the final step of entering nirvana. Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism recognize the existence of thousands of bodhisattvas, although in practice only a small number of these deities are regularly invoked in meditation exercises and devotional rituals. Many bodhisattvas are believed to possess special powers that they use to help those who call on them with sincere faith. Because bodhisattvas still have a strong connection to the earthly realm, they are thought by some believers to be more receptive to pleas for help than buddhas who have already achieved nirvana and departed from the physical world.

Many bodhisattvas can appear in multiple forms, with different names and physical attributes. They are typically portrayed as serene, peaceful beings who dress in fine clothing and wear luxurious jewelry to signify their exalted status, but some can also appear in fierce-looking, wrathful forms. Although most bodhisattvas are usually recognized as being either male or female, some exhibit an androgynous quality that indicates they have transcended the dualities of ordinary existence.

Bodhisattvas function as both protectors and benefactors, providing physical security and material assistance to people in need. As the embodiments of positive qualities such as compassion, wisdom and spiritual power, many bodhisattvas also function as meditational deities for Buddhist clergy and lay people who seek to cultivate those same qualities in themselves. Ultimately, bodhisattvas are symbols of hope and reflect the optimistic Buddhist belief that the world can be improved through virtuous action.





Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 16.2 x 12.7 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.356

Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. He can appear in numerous manifestations with different names and physical attributes. This manifestation of Avalokiteshvara is called Six-Syllable (*Shadakshari*) Avalokiteshvara. He is the guardian of the sacred mantra *oṃ maṇe padme hūm*, which devotees across Asia repeat to invoke Avalokiteshvara's saving power. As here, Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara is typically portrayed seated on a lotus pad in a cross-legged meditation pose. Two of his four arms are positioned in front of his body with the hands held in a gesture of veneration. The remaining two arms extend from his sides with the hands holding a prayer rosary and a lotus blossom. His body is adorned with fine clothing and jewelry, and he typically has an image of his patron, Amitabha Buddha, on his crown or appearing as a smaller head on top of his own head. Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara protects beings in every realm of existence. This painting shows Avalokiteshvara demonstrating his power by conjuring a vision of four realms of existence: the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm and the human realm. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 540-545; Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 182-183; Lipton (1996), pp. 145-146.

Both shown at actual size.



Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 7.6 x 6 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.383

Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara traditionally ranks among the most popular forms of Avalokiteshvara in Mongolia and appears frequently in Mongolian Buddhist art. The elongated body and squared shoulders of the figure in this painting suggest that it may have been created in the city of Dolonnor in what is now the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia. During the Qing dynasty, Dolonnor was home to numerous Buddhist temples and was an important center of Mongolian artistic production. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 240-241.



Eleven-Faced Avalokiteshvara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 10.4 x 9.2 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.324

As described in an early sutra, the Eleven-Faced (*Ekadashamukha*) manifestation of Avalokiteshvara has multiple heads and arms so that he can better provide aid to people in need. His eleven faces appear on five heads that rise upward in a vertical stack. There are three benevolent faces on each of the first three heads; the fourth head has a wrathful face; while the fifth head at the top shows the peaceful face of Amitabha Buddha. The arms on Eleven-Faced Avalokiteshvara can range in number from eight to more than one thousand. The form depicted here has eight arms, two of which are positioned in front of his body with the hands held in a gesture of veneration. The remaining six arms fan outward from the sides of his body. The hands of the top two right arms hold a prayer rosary and a dharma wheel emblem, while the lowest right hand is held palm outward in a gesture of charity or wish-granting. The hands of the three left arms hold a lotus blossom, a bow and arrow and a jar of ambrosia. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 548-555; Meinert (2011), pp. 226-229; Lipton (1996), pp. 146-151.



Eleven-Faced Avalokiteshvara
Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 29.8 x 20.9 cm.
Hope College Collection, 2019.14.2

An apocryphal Tibetan text, the *Mani Kabum*, explains that the eleven-faced form of Avalokiteshvara came into existence after the bodhisattva momentarily succumbed to selfish thoughts about his own impending enlightenment, causing his body and head to shatter into hundreds of pieces. Amitabha Buddha reconstructed Avalokiteshvara into this form, adding extra arms, heads and faces so that he can better provide help to people in need. The three figures depicted below Avalokiteshvara in this painting are the bodhisattvas Vajrapani, White Tara and Green Tara. The three figures above Avalokiteshvara are the 14th-century Tibetan monk Tsongkhapa and his two principal disciples, Gyaltsab Je and Khedrup Je. The somewhat crude quality of this painting suggests that it was made in a provincial workshop. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 228-229.





Arapachana Manjushri

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; steel, silver and glass case. 25.4 x 19 cm.
Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Manjushri is the bodhisattva of wisdom. This painting portrays Manjushri in one of his most iconic forms: sitting comfortably in a cross-legged position atop a lotus throne with his raised right hand holding a flaming sword that he uses to cut through ignorance and obfuscation, and his centrally-positioned left hand holding a lotus blossom on which rests a copy of the *Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajnāpāramitā Sutra*). His body is adorned with fine clothing and jewelry, and his skin radiates a golden light that appears around him as a mandorla. He also bears an image of Shakyamuni on his chest to signify his unwavering devotion to the Buddha's teachings. Manjushri is accompanied in this image by an entourage consisting of two bodhisattvas and six haloed mahasiddhas, or holy men. The blue-skinned figure in the central foreground is the bodhisattva Vajrapani. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 584-585; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=170. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Manjushri Surrounded by Deities
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper and glass case. 11.4 x 9.5 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.334

As the embodiment of wisdom, Manjushri often functions as a meditational deity in Mongolian Buddhism. This painting places Manjushri at the center of a composition that includes four additional meditational deities who are related to Manjushri in some way. The figure in the upper left corner is Shakyamuni Buddha, who is the ultimate source of Manjushri's wisdom. Across from Shakyamuni in the upper right corner is the monk Tsongkhapa, who was a human incarnation of Manjushri and the founder of the Gelug order that became dominant in Mongolia and Tibet after the 16th century. The figure in the lower right corner is Yama Dharmaraja, a wrathful, buffalo-headed protector deity who was once subdued by Manjushri, while the figure in the lower left corner is Supreme Secret Hayagriva, a horse-headed meditational deity who is related to Manjushri's close ally, Avalokiteshvara. This painting's probable use as a devotional object is indicated by five consecration mantras reading *oṃ āh hūm* that are inscribed on the reverse side of the painting behind each of the figures.

Seated Manjushri
Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink on paper. 29.8 x 21.6 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.13.3

This drawing of Manjushri is said to have come from the collection of an artist who worked at the Erdene Zuu Monastery in central Mongolia during the early decades of the 20th century. The drawing may have been used as a model to guide artists in the monastery workshop as they were painting images of Manjushri for devotional use. The Erdene Zuu Monastery was partially destroyed by Mongolia’s communist government in the late 1930s and many of its artistic treasures were lost.





Standing Manjushri
Mongolian, 20th century. Clay, pigments. 102 x 62.2 x 16.5 cm.
Hope College Collection, 2015.60

This sculpture portrays Manjushri in a standing pose with his hands held in positions that signify charity and protection. Together the hand gestures signify that Manjushri welcomes supplications from his followers and will grant their wishes. He is dressed in princely garb with his emblematic sword appearing on a lotus blossom above his left shoulder. Clay sculptures were traditionally made in areas of Mongolia where wood, stone and metal were in short supply. Because they are extremely fragile, few large clay sculptures of this type exist outside of their home region.







Vajrapani
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper, silver and glass case. 10.8 x 9.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.399

Vajrapani is the embodiment of spiritual power. He has been revered as a meditational deity in Mongolia since the 16th century, and is also considered to be the nation's patron saint and protector. As here, Vajrapani is typically portrayed in Mongolian art standing with legs and arms stretched apart in a dynamic pose, and with his raised right hand holding a vajra scepter and his left hand held in front of him in a gesture of warning. He wears a five-jewel crown on his head, and his muscular, blue-skinned body is dressed with a green scarf and tiger-skin loin cloth. Although his grimacing facial expression and threatening hand gestures give Vajrapani a frightening appearance, he is not meant to be feared and is often embraced by monks and lay believers as a personal protector. The reverse of this painting is inscribed with the standard five-syllable consecration mantra *oṃ āh hūṃ svā hā*.
References: Fleming (2011), pp. 724-731; Meinert (2011), pp. 274-283



Vajrapani
Mongolian, early 20th century. Cotton and silk appliqué. 48.9 x 35.6 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.9.1

Appliqué is an art form in which pieces of colored fabric are sewn onto a larger piece of cloth to form a picture or decorative design. The Mongolian tradition of Buddhist appliqué began in the 17th century after the technique was introduced from Tibet. Because appliqué images are more durable than images painted on cloth or paper, they found special favor among the itinerant monks and nomadic families who moved frequently around the Mongolian countryside. Some of the red, pink and purple fabrics used to create this image of Vajrapani were dyed with synthetic aniline colors. Aniline dyes were first invented in Great Britain in the 1850s and quickly gained popularity around the world for their bright hues and resistance to fading. Appliqué images can be difficult to date, but this scroll was probably made in the early decades of the 20th century before the Mongolian communist government began the campaign to suppress Buddhism that lasted into the 1980s. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 22-24; Bartholomew (1995), pp. 83-84.



The Three Lords of the World
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper and glass case. 8.2 x 7.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.348

Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani are collectively known as the Three Lords of the World. Together they represent the ideal union of wisdom, compassion and spiritual power that every Buddhist strives to achieve. This painting shows the three deities in their most iconic forms, with Manjushri in the central position. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with three five-syllable consecration mantras, indicating that it may once have been used in devotional rituals. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 224-226.



The Three Lords of the World
Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 31.7 x 24.8 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.14.1

The iconography of this painting is similar to the previous image, but the style is quite different. Unfortunately, it is not possible to attribute most Mongolian Buddhist paintings to a particular artist or workshop since few paintings are signed and much information about the workshops that produced them was lost when thousands of Mongolia’s temples and monasteries were destroyed by the country’s communist government during the 1930s and 40s.



Green Tara

Mongolian, 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 26 x 19.8 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.47.3

Tantric Buddhist doctrine regards the bodhisattva Tara as a female manifestation of buddhahood. She can appear in multiple forms that are differentiated by skin color, physical characteristics and symbolic attributes. Green Tara is considered to be the most dynamic form of Tara. In Mongolia, she was traditionally invoked for protection on a material level against wild animals, fire, flood and theft, and on a spiritual level against anger, jealousy, greed and delusion. She is typically portrayed sitting on a lotus pad with her left leg bent and her right leg slightly extended to symbolize her readiness for action. Her hands are held in open-palm gestures signifying charity and protection, and she holds two blue *utpala* lotuses to signify her purity and compassion. Her body is richly adorned with gold jewelry and she wears a distinctive conch-shell crown on her head. The opaque green and blue pigments used in this painting may have been made with crushed malachite and azurite, two costly minerals that were thought to imbue paintings with extra spiritual power. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 608-615; Meinert (2011), pp. 364-377; Lipton (1996), pp. 102-104.





Green Tara in Her Heavenly Abode
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 10.5 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.381

This painting portrays Green Tara sitting in her luxuriant heavenly abode. She is accompanied by two attendants: the gold-skinned Ashokakanta Marichi on her left and the blue-skinned Ekajati on her right. The seated figure floating above Tara's head is her spiritual patron, Amitabha Buddha. The figure on the horse below her is Magzor Gyalmo, a protector deity who is regarded by some as a wrathful manifestation of Tara. The two figures flying in the sky above the trees outside Tara's palace are apsaras, mythical female spirits who often serve as attendants to Buddhist deities. The reverse of this painting is inscribed with three five-syllable consecration mantras. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 378-379.





Heroic Red Tara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 10.8 x 7.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.358

Red Tara is associated with power. This specific manifestation of Red Tara comes from a group of twenty-one Taras described by the Indian sage Suryagupta sometime around the 10th century CE. Heroic Red Tara is the first of the twenty-one Suryagupta Taras. She sits cross-legged on a lotus pad with two of her eight arms raised above her head, their hands grasping a golden vajra scepter and bell. The other six arms fan out on either side of her body. The hands on her right side hold a dharma wheel, an arrow and a sword. The hands on her left side hold a conch-shell trumpet, a bow and a lasso for binding her opponents. The reverse of the painting is inscribed with a consecration mantra and there is a kalachakra symbol engraved on the back of its frame. Reference: Kreijger (2001), pp. 58-61; Himalayan Art Resources item no. 72112.

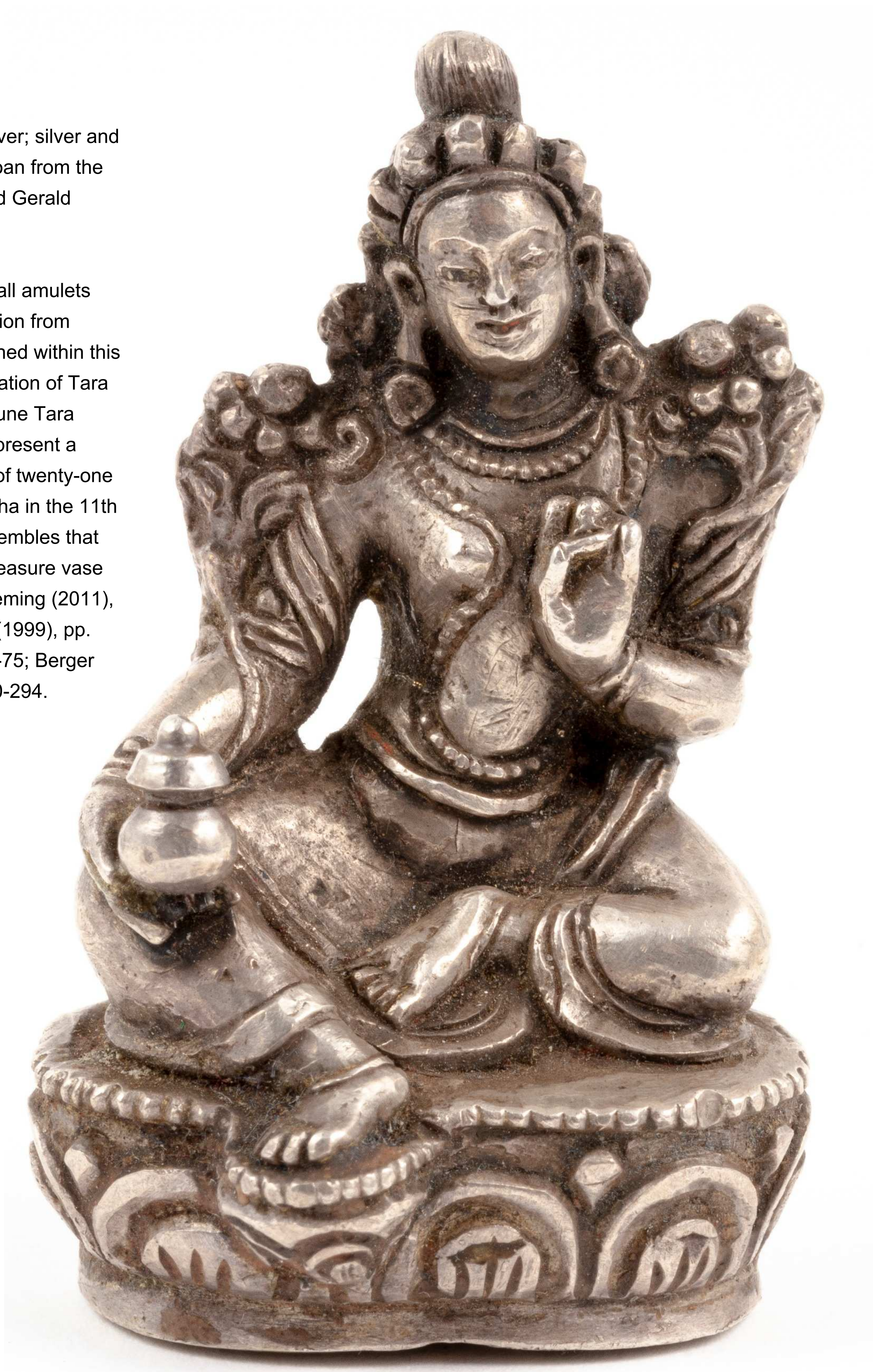


Seven-Eyed White Tara
Mongolian, late 19th-early 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 7.6 x 6.3 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.14.3

Supposedly born from the tears of Avalokiteshvara's left eye, White Tara is believed to be the most compassionate of all the Tara forms. She is associated with long life, and is often invoked by people seeking good health and protection from harm. White Tara is typically depicted sitting in a relaxed pose on a lotus pad with one hand held out in a gesture signifying charity, and the other hand held in a gesture of protection or teaching. Her left hand also holds the stalk of a lotus flower that appears above her left shoulder. This particular manifestation of White Tara is distinguished by the seven eyes that appear on her face, hands and feet, signifying her supernatural abilities to detect people in distress and give them aid. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 600-607; Meinert (2011), pp. 390-395.

Tara Amulet
Mongolian, 19th century. Cast silver; silver and glass case. 5.7 x 3.5 x 2.8 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Mongolians traditionally wore small amulets like this for good luck and protection from harm. The silver sculpture contained within this amulet may represent a manifestation of Tara known as the Dispeller of Misfortune Tara (*Āpadānāśani Tārā*), or it may represent a manifestation of Tara from a set of twenty-one Taras described by the sage Atisha in the 11th century CE. Her seated pose resembles that of Green Tara, but she holds a treasure vase in her right hand. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 616-617; Rhie and Thurman (1999), pp. 201-203; Mullin and Watt, pp. 68-75; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 290-294.





Actual size of amulet.

Ushnishavijaya

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 10.5 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.394

Ushnishavijaya was traditionally invoked by supplicants seeking long life and protection from diseases. As here, she is usually depicted sitting in a cross-legged position with one head, three faces and eight arms. Two arms are positioned in front of her body with the hands holding a four-headed vajra scepter and a lasso. The other six arms fan out from the sides of her body. Her top two right hands hold an image of Amitabha Buddha and an arrow, while the lowest right hand makes a gesture signifying charity. The top hand on the left side makes a gesture signifying protection, while the lower two left hands hold a bow and an urn containing the elixir of long life. Gold ingots and piles of jewels are placed on the ground in front of her as offerings. Ushnishavijaya is often worshipped together with Amitayus Buddha and White Tara, but she can also be the sole focus of devotional activities. The reverse side of this painting is inscribed with the three-syllable consecration mantra, *oṃ āh hūm*. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 626-639; Meinert (2011), pp. 400-403.





Maitreya

Mongolian, 19th century. Clay; wood stand. 9.5 x 8.9 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Small clay votive tablets (*tsatsa*) were traditionally made by Mongolian Buddhist monks as a devotional practice. To create the tablets, the monks first pressed lumps of damp clay into metal molds while offering prayers to the depicted deities. The molded tablets were then laid out to dry in the sun, after which they were buffed smooth and sometimes painted. Finally, the finished tablets were given or sold to other monks and lay believers to use in their own devotional rituals. The figure portrayed on this tablet is Maitreya, a bodhisattva who will emerge in the future as the Buddha of the next age. As here, Maitreya is typically portrayed as a regal figure, dressed in fine clothing and sitting on a throne in the Tushita Heaven where he currently resides. Maitreya was held in especially high esteem by the Gelug School and the Maitreya Festival was an important annual event at most Mongolian Gelug monasteries and temples. Reference: Kelényi (2013); Fleming (2011), pp. 102-111; Meinert (2011), pp. 140-147; Berger (1995), pp. 62-



Vajrasattva with His Consort

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 32.4 x 26.3 cm. Hope College Collection, 2018.32

Vajrasattva is a manifestation of the primordial Vajradhara Buddha. He is often shown seated in yab-yum embrace with his consort Vajrasattvika to represent the perfect union of wisdom and compassion. Vajrasattva is portrayed here with white skin and a third eye in the middle of his forehead. He wears a silk skirt and scarf along with a gold crown and various pieces of gold jewelry. His hands hold a gold vajra scepter and bell. His white-skinned consort also wears fine silk clothing and abundant gold jewelry. Her upraised hands hold a ritual flaying knife and a skull-cup brimming with blood. Horizontal creases indicate that this painting was once folded into quarters, perhaps to hide it during the Mongolian communist suppression of Buddhism in the 1930s and 40s. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 308-309; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=154. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Vajrasattva with His Consort
Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 12.7 x 10.2 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.5

This painting portrays the same subject as the previous image, but in a simpler style. Here Vajrasattvika's arms are shown wrapped around Vajrasattva's neck, and Vajrasattva has a symbolic third eye rather than a real one. Vajrasattva and his consort functioned as important meditational deities in Mongolian Tantric Buddhism.

Section Three: Dharmapala

Dharmapala means “Dharma Protector.” In Buddhism, the term dharma refers to the body of teachings received from Shakyamuni Buddha and other sages that describe the true nature of existence. It includes the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path as well as the wisdom that is included in various sutras, sermons and other textual and oral traditions. Buddhists believe that because this knowledge guides people toward enlightenment, it is precious and must be protected.

The dharmapala are a class of fierce-looking deities who use their prodigious powers to safeguard the Buddha’s teachings and his followers. Many dharmapala can appear in multiple forms with different names and physical characteristics. Some are wrathful manifestations of bodhisattvas whose frightening looks belie their essentially benevolent natures. Other protectors are manifestations of indigenous gods and nature spirits who were originally malevolent but later became good after they were converted to Buddhism by various saints and sages. Regardless of their origins, most dharmapala are portrayed as fearsome beings who brandish weapons and other terrifying attributes that are meant to scare their enemies and warn their followers about the consequences of sin.

In addition to defending the Buddhist faith, many dharmapala also double as meditational deities. As meditational deities, these seemingly terrible beings represent the negative thoughts, emotions and behaviors that must be conquered and eliminated through practice of the dharma. The deities may also be invoked as personal protectors to help guide adherents through the physical, mental and spiritual challenges that accompany advanced tantric religious practices.

Six-Armed Mahakala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 36.8 x 29.2 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.11.9

A wrathful form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Mahakala has been revered in Mongolia as both a dharma protector and a meditational deity since the 16th century. There are many different forms of Mahakala. The Six-Armed (*Shadbhuja*) Mahakala portrayed here has black skin, three glaring eyes and a mouth full of sharp fanged teeth. His upswept hair is encircled by a crown made of five human skulls, and his body is adorned with an elephant-hide cape, a tiger-skin loincloth and jewelry made of human bones. Two of his six arms are positioned in front of his body with the hands holding a ritual flaying knife and a skull cup brimming with blood. His other four arms fan out from the sides of his body with the hands holding a skull rosary, a skull-form hand drum, a trident spear and a lasso. His feet trample the corpse of an elephant and his body is surrounded by a mandorla of flames. To make this image even more terrifying, Mahakala is shown here flanked by two ogres, Jinamitra and Takkiraja, who stand over an offering bowl on the ground that contains an assortment of human body parts. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 732-743 and 756-779; Meinert (2011), pp. 590-605; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 236-237.





Six-Armed Mahakala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 6 x 5.4 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.369



Six-Armed Mahakala
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; steel and glass case. 7.6 x 5.7 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2016.22.3.1

The images of Mahakala in these two paintings have the same basic iconographic features as the previous painting. The figures are highly animated and were painted using subtly modulated shading techniques that effectively convey a sense of three-dimensional volume. Small paintings of Mahakala like these were traditionally used by Mongolian Buddhist monks and lay believers as talismans for protection, and as focal points for meditation and visualization exercises.



White Mahakala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, tin and glass case. 10.2 x 7.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.371



White Mahakala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.8 x 7.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.395

The physical attributes of White Mahakala are similar to those of the black and blue-skinned forms of Six-Armed Mahakala seen in the previous paintings, but instead of holding a flaying knife and skull-cup, his middle hands hold a wish-granting jewel and a jar of longevity elixir. White Mahakala is also portrayed wearing finer garments than Six-Armed Mahakala, and his jewelry is made of gold instead of human bone. White Mahakala was traditionally regarded in Mongolia as a provider of spiritual and material wealth, and was invoked by devotees seeking prosperity and long life. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 782-795; Meinert (2011), pp. 608-611; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 238-239.





Sutra Wrapper with Six-Armed Mahakala
Mongolian or Tibetan, 18th-19th century. Ink and pigments on silk. 150 x 55.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.425

This thin silk cloth may originally have been used to wrap a Buddhist sutra, or holy text, to keep it clean and provide it with extra spiritual protection. The central image on the cloth is the familiar six-armed form of Mahakala. The ground below Mahakala is strewn with offerings that include one skull cup filled with human sense organs, another skull cup containing a jar of ambrosia, two skull cups filled with blood, a cluster of symbolic jewels, multiple ritual weapons, and a herd of yaks and goats that are protected by a guard dog wearing a spiked collar.



Vajrabhairava
Mongolian, 19th century. Gold and pigment on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case.
14.6 x 12.1 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.328

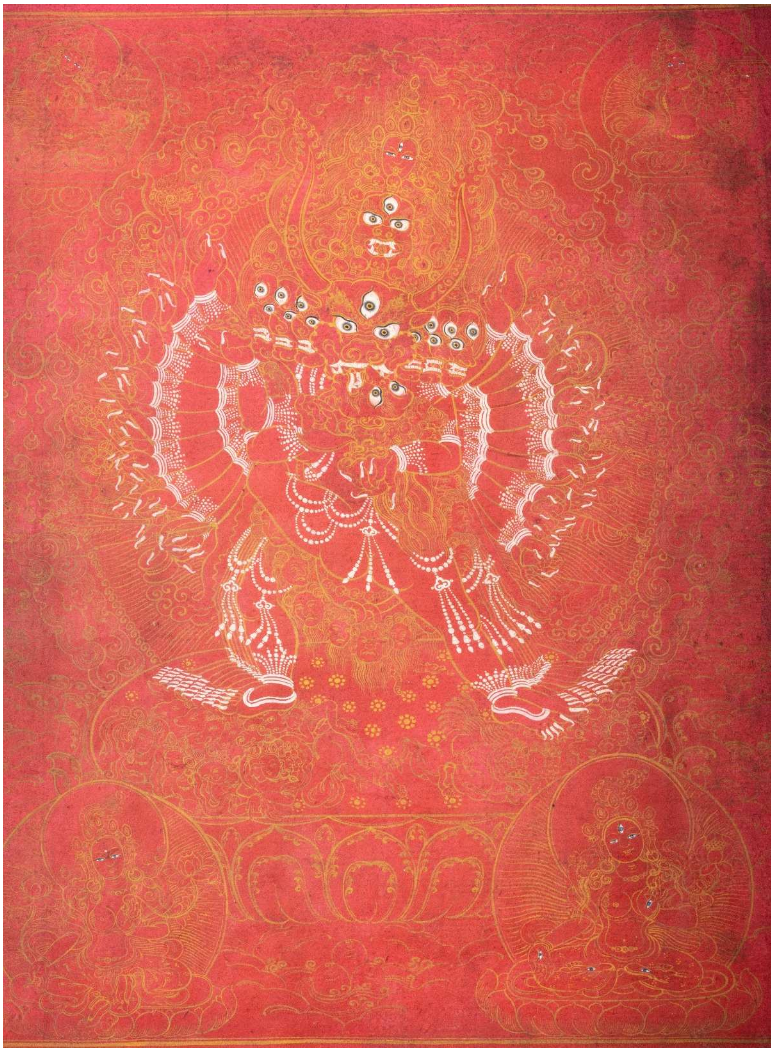
Vajrabhairava—sometimes also known as Yamantaka—is a wrathful form of the bodhisattva Manjushri. He is one of the chief protectors of the Gelug School and has been an important meditational deity in Mongolia since the late 16th century. The form of Vajrabhairava depicted here has three heads, nine faces, thirty-four arms and sixteen legs. His primary face is that of an angry buffalo, but the peaceful face of Manjushri on his topmost head reminds us of his fundamentally benevolent nature. Vajrabhairava's many hands hold various weapons and tantric ritual implements that symbolize his power to destroy all obstacles and defilements. His feet trample assorted gods, humans, animals, birds and fish to symbolize his power over all realms of existence. Like many wrathful deities, Vajrabhairava adorns his body with human skulls and bone ornaments to remind believers that death is inevitable but not to be feared. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 706-719; Meinert (2011), pp. 457-460; Kreijger (2001), pp. 150-151.





Vajrabhairava with Three Forms of Yama Dharmaraja
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 25.7 x 19.7 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Legend says that Yama Dharmaraja began his existence as a humble monk who was meditating in a cave when three outlaws entered the cave and killed a sacred buffalo they had recently stolen. As soon as they realized there was a witness to their crime, the outlaws murdered the monk, cut off his head, and cast his body aside. The monk's spirit was so enraged by this cruel act that it reanimated his body, placed the head of the slaughtered buffalo on his shoulders, and immediately killed the three outlaws. His bloodlust unquenched, Yama was preparing to continue his killing spree when Manjushri assumed the form of Yamantaka/ Vajrabhairava and subdued Yama, installing him as lord of the underworld and judge of deceased souls. This painting of Vajrabhairava with three different forms of Yama Dharmaraja may once have been used in meditation and visualization exercises by a monk studying the various tantras associated with these deities. Reference: Kreijger (2001), pp. 100-101.



Red-ground Vajrabhairava
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; wood and glass frame. 31.1 x 24.2 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Above.

Black-ground Vajrabhairava
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 7.6 x 6.3 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.385

The practice of painting deities using gold ink on red and black backgrounds was brought to Mongolia from Tibet sometime around the 17th or 18th century. The black-ground technique was used exclusively for images of wrathful deities, but the red-ground technique could be used for images of both wrathful and benevolent deities. The gold paint gives the images an ethereal quality, causing them to shimmer and seemingly come alive when seen in the low, flickering candlelight of a temple or monastery. The reverse side of the red-ground painting illustrated here is inscribed with a consecration mantra enclosed within an image of a Buddhist stupa. Reference: Fleming (2011), p. 22

Facing page.





Three Forms of Yama Dharmaraja
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.5 x 7.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.375

There are three principle forms of Yama Dharmaraja. The blue-skinned figure in the center of this painting represents the inner form of Yama Dharmaraja. He has two arms, two legs and a demon’s face with three eyes and a mouth full of sharp teeth. He wears a crown of human skulls and a tiger-skin loin cloth, and his hands hold a flaying knife and a skull cup filled with blood. The blue-skinned figure in the lower right corner is the outer form of Yama Dharmaraja. He has the head of an angry buffalo, and is shown holding a bone mace in his upraised right hand and a lasso in his left hand. He wears a crown of skulls and a garland of freshly severed human heads around his neck. He is accompanied by his consort, Chamundi, who holds a skull cup filled with blood and a skull-topped trident spear. They both stand on a bull that in turn is lying on a supine human figure. The pink-skinned figure in the lower left corner is the secret form of Yama Dharmaraja. He has the same head and body as the outer form of Yama Dharmaraja, but holds the same type of ritual flaying knife and skull cup as the inner form. The three forms of Yama Dharmaraja are invoked in meditation practices and rituals associated with the Vajrabhairava, Krishna Yamari and Rakta Yamari Tantras. The reverse of this painting is inscribed with three consecration mantras. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 798-799.



Image above shows reverse of painting at actual size.



Outer Yama Dharmaraja with Consort

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.2 x 7.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.359



Outer Yama Dharmaraja with Consort

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; gilt silver and glass case. 6.0 x 6.0 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2016.22.5.1

These two paintings both depict the outer form of Yama Dharmaraja, using the same basic iconographic features seen in the previous painting. Outer Yama Dharmaraja was particularly revered in Mongolia as a guardian of the Gelug order, and paintings of him were used by monks and lamas of that school as protective talismans and devotional objects. Both of the paintings shown here are inscribed with consecration mantras on their reverse sides. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 800-809; Meinert (2011), pp. 474-475.



Magzor Gyalmo Surrounded by Deities
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 36.8 x 29.8 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.8

The name Magzor Gyalmo means “The Queen Who Turns Back Armies.” She is the only female among the major Vajrayana dharmapala deities. As here, Magzor Gyalmo is typically portrayed riding on a mule through a river of blood. She has blue or black skin with red or orange hair that sweeps up above her head like a flame. Her raised right hand holds a vajra-tipped mace while her left hand holds a skull cup brimming with blood. She wears a crown made of human skulls, jewelry made of human bones, and a cape made of human skin. In her teeth she holds a small, white human corpse. She is flanked by her two attendants, Makaramukha on the left and Simhamukha on the right. Resting on the ground directly below her mule are several piles of symbolic jewels and three skulls filled with offerings of human body parts. Devotional rituals for Magzor Gyalmo were traditionally performed in Mongolian Gelug temples on the first day of the lunar year to provide protection and bring prosperity in the coming year. This painting may have been used in such rituals since it also includes images of the wealth deities White Mahakala and Vaishravana, as well as images of the founder of the Gelug order, Tsongkhapa, and his two main disciples, Gyaltsab Je and Khedrup Je. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 810-823; Meinert (2011), pp. 528-552; Kreijger (2001), pp. 94-95.

Magzor Gyalmo
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, tin and glass case.
10.8 x 8.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.338

There are multiple origin stories for Magzor Gyalmo, which combine elements borrowed from various ancient Indian and indigenous Himalayan goddess myths. She appears to have been one of the most popular subjects in Mongolian Buddhist art during the 19th century, and images of her can be found in a wide variety of genres, including paintings, prints, textiles, sculptures and votive tablets. References: Mullin and Watt (2003), pp. 182-185; Kreijger (2001), pp. 94-95; Davies (2010), p. 15.



Magzor Gyalmo
Mongolian, 18th-19th century. Wood, paste, pigments. 45.7 x 38.1 x 17.8 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.314

Many Buddhist sculptures are consecrated by placing holy texts or objects inside them. Consecrated sculptures are believed to contain the spirit of the deity they depict. This sculpture of Magzor Gyalmo has two cavities in the back of the deity’s head and torso that contain unidentified consecration materials and are sealed with sacred characters written in Sanskrit. Reference: Lipton (1996), p. 33; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 243-244.

Facing page.







Magzor Gyalmo
Mongolian, 19th century. Bronze, pigments. 8.2 x 8.9 x 3.2 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This painted metal sculpture of Magzor Gyalmo may once have been part of an altar group. Its diminutive size suggests that it was either a secondary figure within the group, or that the group as a whole was made for use on a small private altar rather than in a large institutional worship space.





Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva

Mongolian, early 20th century. Cotton and silk appliqué. 84.4 x 71.4 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.10.1

Hayagriva was originally a Hindu deity who became part of the Buddhist pantheon sometime around the 6th century CE. In Tantric Buddhism, Hayagriva is considered to be a wrathful manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and can appear in several forms, primarily as a meditational deity. The form of Hayagriva depicted here is called Secret Accomplishment (*Guhyasadana*) Hayagriva. He has one head, three faces, six arms and eight legs. His most distinctive attributes are the three horseheads that grow from his upswept hair. The hands of Hayagriva's three right arms hold a vajra scepter, a mace and a sword. The hand of his top left arm is held out in a warning gesture while the other two left hands hold a spear and a lasso. He also wears a skull crown and bone jewelry, and sports a belt of freshly severed human heads around his tiger-skin loincloth. His eight feet trample on bundles of multi-colored snakes and he is surrounded by a luminous mandorla. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 570-571; Meinert (2011), pp. 484-485; Kreijger (2001), pp. 106-107; Lipton (1996), pp. 111-114; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 234-235.



Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 8.2 x 6.3 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.350

Because of the horse heads that sprout from his hair, Hayagriva is especially revered in Mongolia where he is considered the patron saint of nomads and horse herders. Lay Buddhists often invoke Hayagriva to protect their horses from injury and to help them win races. Reference: Wallace (2015), pp. 214-217.



Supreme Secret Hayagriva
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; gilt copper, silver and glass case. 7.9 x 6.3 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.387

Supreme Secret (*Atiguhya*) Hayagriva can be distinguished from Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva by the single horse head in his hair, by the wings that spread out behind his arms, and by the different implements he holds in his hands. His right hands hold an iron hook, a mace and a ritual knife; his left hands hold a lasso, a sword and a skull cup filled with blood. As here, Supreme Secret Hayagriva is often shown embracing his consort Padmanarteshvari. Instead of standing on snakes, this form of Hayagriva stands on two demons, Kali and Rudra. Supreme Secret Hayagriva was traditionally revered as a meditational deity in Mongolia, especially by monks and lamas from the Nyingma and Gelug schools. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 568-569; Meinert (2011), pp. 494-501







Vaishravana Riding on a Lion
Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink and pigments on paper. 28.6 x 25.4 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.13.5

Vaishravana is a complex deity. He is King of the Yakshas, a class of powerful nature spirits that appear in both Buddhist and Hindu mythology. Through his association with the Indian deity Kubera, Vaishravana is also regarded as a god of wealth and good luck. In Mongolia, Tibet and China, Vaishravana is further revered as the Guardian of the North and chief of the Guardians of the Four Directions, and because he once swore an oath to protect Shakyamuni Buddha, he is also classified as a worldly dharma protector. As here, Vaishravana is often depicted in Mongolian art riding on a snow lion. He carries a spear and a victory banner, and holds a jewel-spitting rat or mongoose in his left hand. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 824-831; Meinert (2011), pp. 646-651; Kreijger (2001), pp. 102-103; Berger and Batholomew (1995), pp. 232-233.

Vaishravana Riding on a Lion
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 8.2 x 7.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.401

Vaishravana is portrayed here wearing the luxurious clothing and jewelry of a heavenly prince. The stream of gold coins pouring from the mouth of Vaishravana's mongoose indicates that this painting was made for use in wealth-generating rituals. Wealth-generating rituals were typically not intended to bring personal riches to the supplicant. Rather, they were intended to generate resources that could be used to alleviate poverty and end suffering. Reference: Meinert (2011), p. 280.



Guardian General
Mongolian, 19th century. Gilt bronze.
38.7 x 26.7 x 11.5 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This sculpture was made from a sheet of bronze that was hammered from behind to produce a raised image of the deity. The figure may originally have belonged to a set of sculptures depicting the guardians of the four or eight directions. Because the figure is missing the attributes that he once held in his hands, his exact identity is difficult to determine.





Begtse Chen

Mongolian, 20th century. Ink on paper. 29.8 x 21.6 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.13.2

The name Begtse Chen means “Hidden Coat of Mail.” Begtse was originally a Central Asian war god who was incorporated into the Tantric Buddhist pantheon as a protector deity sometime around the 11th century CE. He is typically portrayed as a fierce-looking warrior with three eyes and a mouth full of sharp, fanged teeth. He wears a five-skull crown and the resplendent uniform of a military general. His right hand brandishes a sword above his head while his left hand holds a human heart in front of his chest. His feet trample on the supine bodies of a human and a horse. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 832-837; Meinert (2011), pp. 508-525; Kreijger (2001), pp. 98-99; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 244-247.

Begtse Chen

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 7.6 x 6.0 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2016.22.2.1

Begtse, also called Jamsaran in Mongolia, appears here flanked by two attendants: Sogdag Marpo on the left riding a wolf, and Rigspa Lhamo on the right riding a bear. The figures on the ground below him are the so-called Eight Butchers who stand ready to attack Begtse's enemies on his orders. The figure in the upper left corner is Padmasambhava, the grand patriarch of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism. The figure in the upper right corner is Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva. In the Gelug tradition, Begtse is one of the main protector deities invoked in Hayagriva Tantra meditation practice. Reference: Wallace (2015), pp. 205-214.





Begtse Chen
Mongolian, 19th century. Bronze. 19 x 14 x 5 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton



Nine Dralha Brothers with Vajrapani and Samantabhadra
Mongolian, 19th century. Ink and pigment on sized cloth. 64.1 x 49.8 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2018.10.9

The Dralha are a class of warrior deities who legend says were vanquished and transformed into dharma protectors by the Indian sage Padmasambhava in the 8th century CE. They are typically portrayed as mounted warriors and can appear singly or in groups. This painting depicts nine Dralha warriors surrounding a central figure who sits on his horse facing directly forward. The Dralha are controlled by the bodhisattva Vajrapani, who appears in this painting directly above the central figure. The figure riding an elephant to the right of Vajrapani is Samantabhadra, another bodhisattva who is associated with action and method in Tantric Buddhist practice. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 878-881; Meinert (2011), pp. 678-689; Lipton (1996), pp. 194-196; Himalayan Art Resources item no. 50072.



Five Pehar Kings
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 8.9 x 6.7 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.353

Legend says that Pehar was a malevolent nature spirit who was tamed by the Indian guru Padmasambhava and transformed into a protector of Buddhism sometime around the 8th century CE. He is often represented by five mounted warrior kings who signify the different aspects of Pehar's body, mind, speech, attributes and actions. The five Pehar kings can be portrayed individually or together in varying formations. In these two paintings, the three-faced, six-armed Actions King appears in the center of the composition, riding a white lion and holding an axe, a sword, a bow and arrow, a knife and a mace. The other four kings appear in the corners of the image, with the Attributes King appearing in the upper left corner riding a black mule and holding an axe; the Speech King appearing in the upper right corner riding a gray horse and holding a club; the Mind King appearing in the lower right corner riding a white elephant and holding a razor knife; and the Body King appearing in the lower left corner riding a white lion and holding a vajra scepter. The figure at the top center of the painting at right is Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva. The figure at the bottom center of the painting is Damchen Garwa Nagpo. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 866-871; Meinert (2011), pp. 632-639.



Five Pehar Kings
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, tin and glass case.
15.9 x 14 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.329



Dorje Ta’og

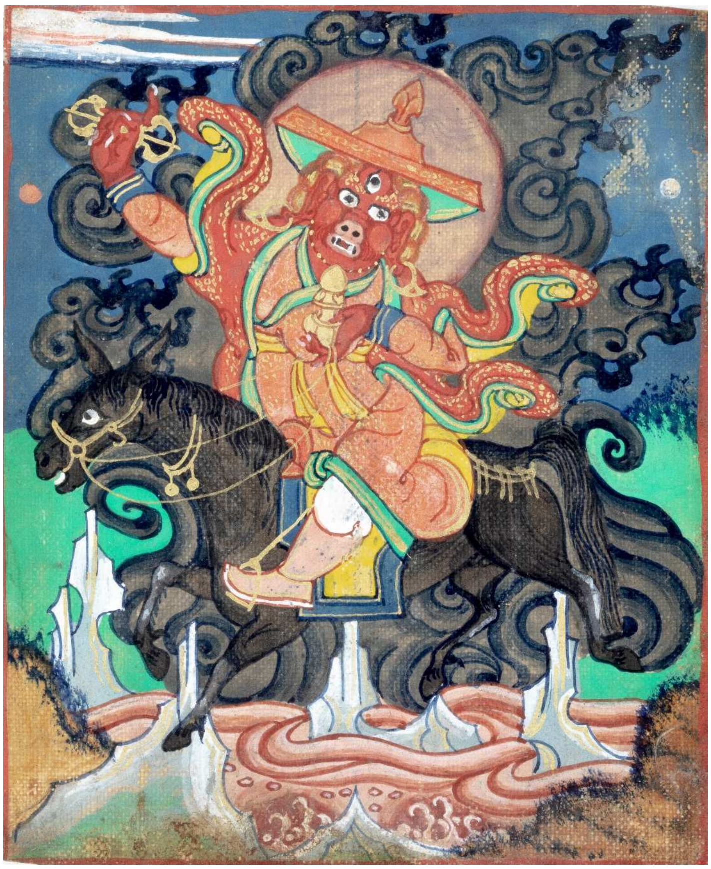
Mongolian, 20th century. Ink on paper. 27.3 x 21.6 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.9.3

Dorje Ta’og was originally a demon spirit who was subjugated and transformed into a dharma protector by Padmasambhava in the 8th century CE. He was adopted as a special protector of the Sera and Samye monasteries in Tibet, and was probably brought by monks from those monasteries to Mongolia in the 17th or 18th century. He is depicted here as having the face of an ogre, with three eyes and a mouth full of fanged teeth. He wears a riding robe and lacquered riding hat. His right hand brandishes a vajra scepter while his left hand holds a jar of ambrosia. This drawing shows him accompanied by two attendants, one on foot carrying a mace and the other on horseback holding a vajra scepter. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=1911. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Dorje Ta’og
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 9.8x8.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.365

Dorje Ta’og
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.8x8.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.332



Damchen Garwa Nagpo
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 15.9 x 12.7 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.2.4

According to legend, Damchen Garwa Nagpo was originally a blacksmith who once took a vow to protect Buddhism and was subsequently transformed into a fearsome guardian deity. He is typically portrayed riding on a goat, wearing a lacquered riding hat and riding clothes, and holding a hammer and tiger-skin bellows to remind devotees of his former occupation. In Mongolia, Damchen Garwa Nagpo was traditionally regarded as a special protector of the Gelug and Nyingma orders. He was also invoked by lay Buddhists as the patron saint of craftsmen and gamblers. A 19th-century Mongolian text says that burning goat fat when making an offering to Damchen Garwa Nagpo will inspire the deity to answer those prayers more quickly. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 658-663; Meinert (2011), pp. 658-663; Lipton (1996), pp. 192-196.







Lords of the Cemetery
Mongolian, 19th century. Wood, papier maché, pigments. 70 x 53.3 x 27.3 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

The Lords of the Cemetery (*Shmashana Adhipati*) take the form of two dancing skeletons, one male and one female. The male skeleton brandishes a bone club and holds a skull cup brimming with blood. The female skeleton holds a stalk of grain and a magic vase. The Lords of the Cemetery were traditionally invoked in various tantric rituals to protect against criminals and to bring material gain. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 894-895; Meinert (2011), pp. 632-633; Linrothe and Watt (2004), pp. 126-129

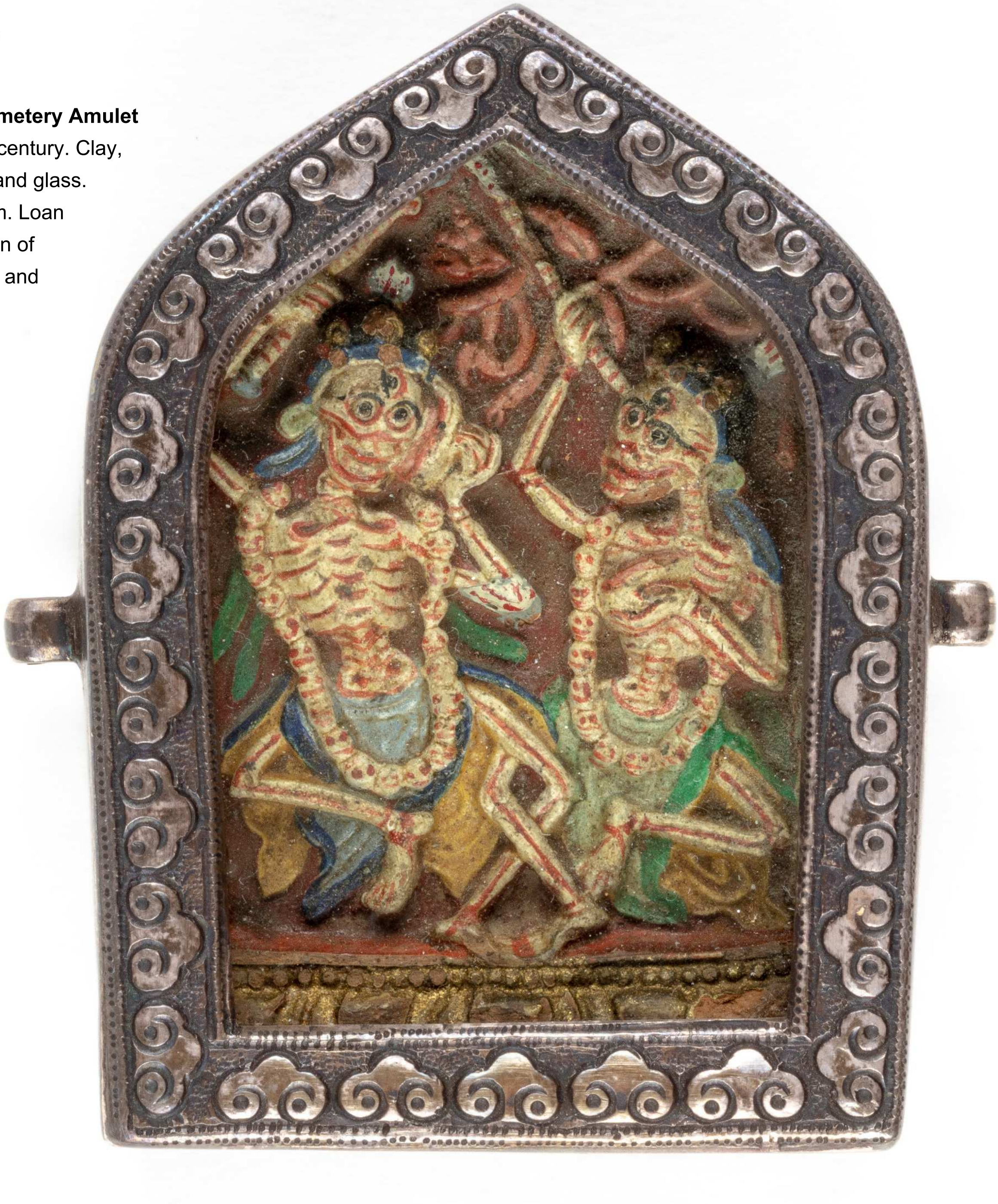


Lords of the Cemetery
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper and glass case. 12.1 x 10.1 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.6

Legend says that the Lords of the Cemetery began their existence as two ascetics who went to a cemetery to meditate on death. While in the cemetery, they encountered a band of grave robbers who murdered them and left their bodies lying beside the desecrated graves. The spirits of the slain ascetics vowed to remain in the cemetery to protect other innocent people from the same fate, and thus the Lords of the Cemetery were born. The reverse side of this painting is inscribed with a three-syllable consecration mantra. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=160. Accessed 5/13/2019.

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Lords of the Cemetery Amulet
Mongolian, 19th century. Clay, pigments, silver and glass. 5.7 x 4.4 x 1.9 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton





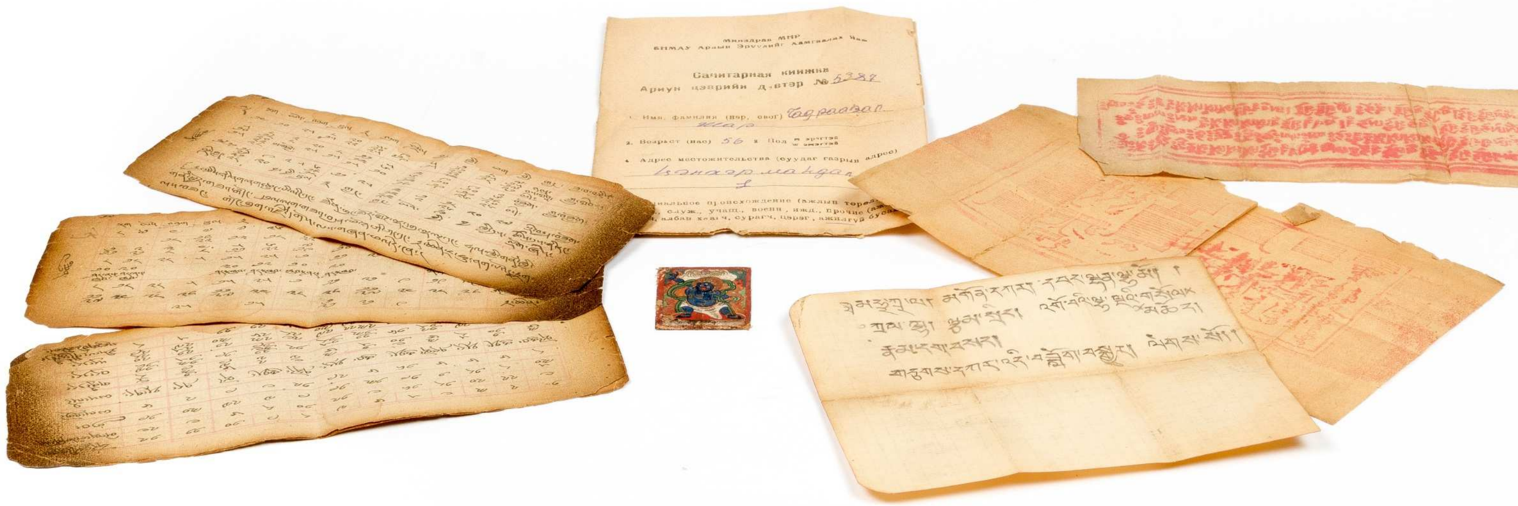
Plaque with Dancing Skeleton Motif
Tibetan, 19th century. Human or animal bone, wood stand. 12 x 2.2 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This plaque was once part of a ritual apron made of bone plaques and beads strung together with cord. The apron would have been worn by a Buddhist monk during the performance of tantric rituals and dances, or used to adorn sculptures depicting wrathful protector and meditation deities. Tradition says that the bones used to make these ritual aprons came from the remains of deceased monks, but recent studies have shown that at least some of the bones also came from animals. The dancing skeleton on this plaque may represent one of the two Lords of the Cemetery. Reference: Lipton (1996), pp. 216-219; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=3975. Accessed 5/13/2019.

Retinue Figure for a Tantric Deity
Mongolian, 19th century. Bronze, pigments. 5.4 x 6.3 x 2.5 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

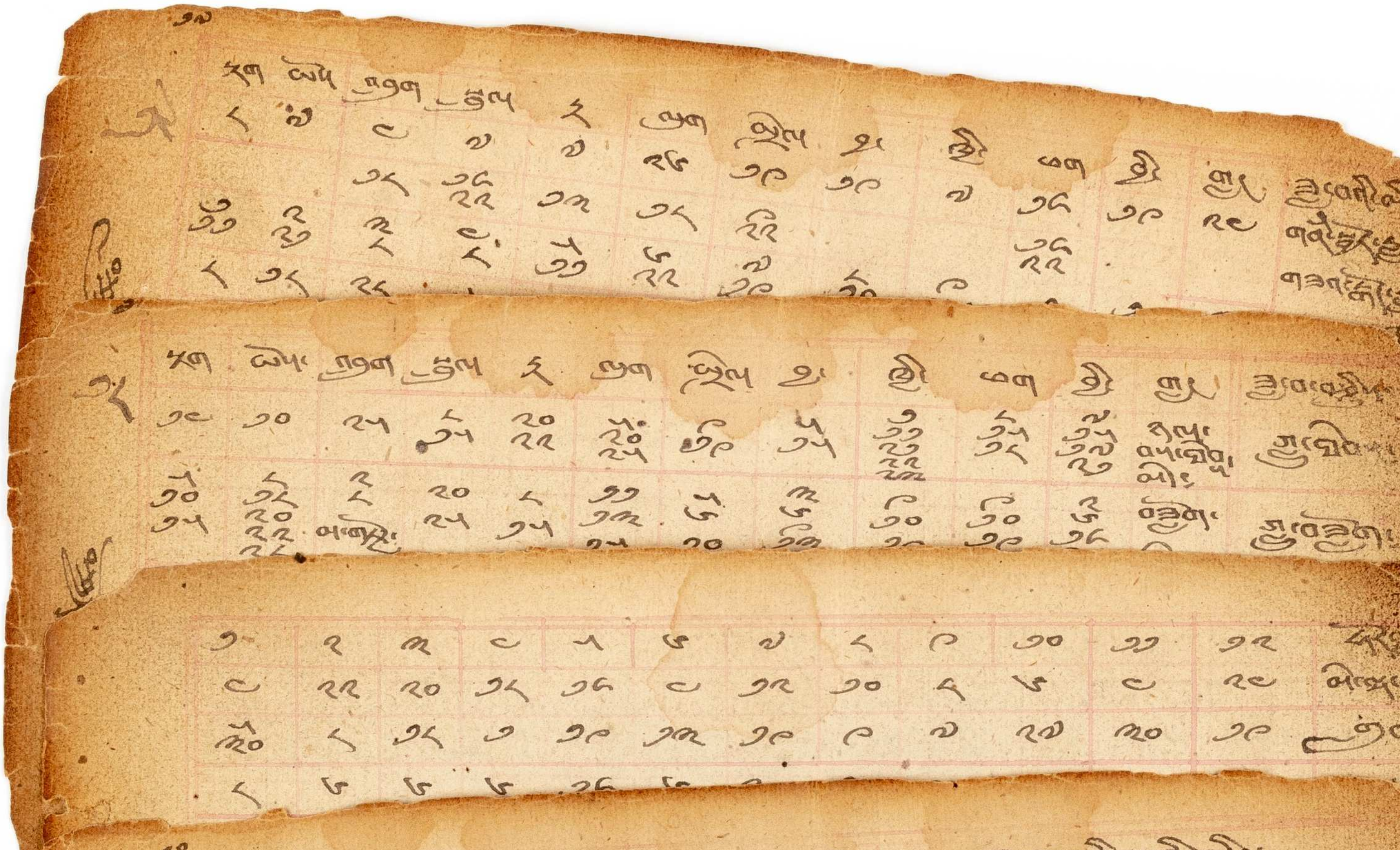
Many wrathful tantric deities are portrayed in paintings accompanied by multiple attendants and retinue figures, many of whom take the form of ogres or demons. This small sculpture of a blue-skinned demon riding on the back of a white-skinned human may be such a retinue figure. If so, it probably once belonged to a larger set of sculptures that would have been displayed on an altar in a Buddhist temple or private dwelling.




Минздрав МНР
Санитарная книжка
Ариун цэврийн дэвтэр №5387
Имя, фамилия (нэр, овог)
2. Возраст (нас) 56
Адрес местожительства (суудаг газрын адрес)







Mongolian Buddhist Miniature Paintings



For many centuries, Mongolian Buddhist monks and lay believers have used small-format paintings housed in box-like frames to perform their daily devotional rituals and meditation exercises. In form and function, these paintings derive from two genres of traditional Tibetan Buddhist painting: *tsakli* and *thangka*. *Tsakli* are ritual cards featuring images of Buddhist deities and symbols that were traditionally used by Tibetan monks and lamas to perform various types of divination, initiation, and consecration rituals. Produced in multi-card sets, *tsakli* were painted on pieces of thick paper or stiffened cloth and typically measured between five and fifteen centimeters on a side. The term *thangka* literally means "something that can be rolled." It usually refers to larger-sized scroll paintings depicting deities, holy men, mandalas and other religious subjects that were traditionally used in Tibetan temples for devotion, meditation and instruction.

The Tibetan clerics who helped establish Tantric Buddhism as the dominant religion in Mongolia between the 16th and 18th centuries almost certainly brought both *tsakli* and *thangkas* with them. We can easily imagine that the Tibetan emissaries left behind some of the paintings at the newly established Mongolian monasteries and temples, and that those paintings in turn became models for the Mongolian artists who were charged with creating religious images for those institutions. Because Mongolian Buddhist miniature paintings combine elements of both *tsakli* and *thangka* but do not conform precisely to either genre, Stevan Davies has proposed that we should refer to them using the Mongolian term *burhany zurag*—literally "deity pictures." This term has the advantage of not implying a particular set of formal or functional qualities, while simultaneously reminding us that Mongolian Buddhist art has a distinct cultural history and is not simply an extension of Tibetan Buddhist art.

Most *burhany zurag* images were traditionally painted on cotton cloth that was sized with a solution made of crushed chalk, animal-skin glue and alcohol. After the sizing solution was brushed onto the cloth and allowed to dry, the cloth was rubbed with a fine-grained pebble to create a smooth, durable surface for painting.

Before any paint was applied, the compositions were usually sketched onto the sized cloth with charcoal or light ink. Artists followed strict rules that governed the proportions, physical characteristics, symbolic attributes and color schemes of every important figure in the pictures. Although artists were allowed some leeway in the arrangement of figures and in the depiction of any landscape and architectural settings around the figures, the production of these paintings was typically driven less by the artists' creative imaginations and more by their deep knowledge of sacred texts and visual art traditions. Indeed, for many artists—both monks and lay practitioners—painting *burhany zurag* images was an act of deep religious devotion, not an exercise in personal expression.

The paints used in *burhany zurag* images were made with powdered pigments derived from both plant and mineral sources. Those pigments were mixed with animal-skin glue and water to produce a varied palette of rich, mostly opaque colors. Gold and silver pigments were made by adding powdered metals to the basic glue and water solution. In some instances, gold and silver accents were created by adhering metallic foils directly to the painting surfaces.

Little is known about how *burhany zurag* paintings got from the artists who made them to the monks and lay people who owned and used them. Some paintings, especially those depicting the most popular deities, may have been readily available for purchase from the artists' workshops, while other images depicting more obscure deities or unusual combinations of deities may have been painted on a commission basis. Paintings were not always acquired new and could also be passed on as heirlooms within families or otherwise transferred to second-hand owners whose devotional practices involved worship of the same deities.

Burhany zurag paintings were traditionally kept in box-like frames called *gau* and *gungervaa*. *Gau* frames are typically made of metal—most often copper, bronze, silver and steel—and are sometimes decorated with gilt designs or inset with semi-precious stones, glass or enamels. *Gungervaa* frames are typically made of wood and are usually decorated with paint and gilding. Both *gau* and *gungervaa* frames have sliding back panels that allow paintings and other materials of religious or personal significance to be placed inside. Apart from paintings, other materials often found inside these frames include: printed deity images; printed and hand-drawn charms and incantations; fragments of old sutras and prayer scarves; as well as various types of documents, receipts, newspaper clippings and photographs. When they contain sacred paintings and other religious materials, *gau* and *gungervaa* can function as miniature shrines for use in personal devotional rituals and meditation exercises. The frames can also be incorporated as elements of larger household, temple or monastic shrines. Some *gau* frames have loops on their tops or sides where cords can be attached to hang the frames around their owners' necks or strap them to the owners' bodies. When the frames are worn bodily in this way, they function as talismans to provide protection or bring good fortune to their owners.



The diminutive size of *burhany zurag* paintings was a key reason for their widespread use in traditional Mongolian culture. Mongolia is a large country with a small population. Historically, much of Mongolia's population was nomadic or semi-nomadic, moving periodically around the land in search of fresh pasturage for their flocks of sheep, goats, horses and camels. Even Buddhist monks in Mongolia often moved regularly between monasteries, and traveled to rejoin their clans at certain times of the year. Given this highly mobile way of life, small-scale, easily portable paintings and sculptures were naturally much more convenient to own and use in personal devotions than larger works of art.

The small size of *burhany zurag* paintings also played a crucial role in their survival during the period from the 1920s through the 1980s when Buddhism was officially suppressed by the communist government of Mongolia. Much of Mongolia's institutional Buddhist art was lost when the state tore down thousands of the country's temples and monasteries in the 1930s and 40s. But many smaller Buddhist artworks were hidden in homes and yurts and kept away from destructive government zealots. When the Mongolian communist government fell from power in 1991, thousands of *burhany zurag* paintings and other artworks resurfaced and helped pave the way for the resurgence of Buddhist culture that Mongolia is enjoying today.

References: Davies (2010); Fleming (2011), pp. 22-24; Czaja (2013), pp. 38-44; Meinert (2011), pp. 24-26; Bartholomew (1995), p. 83.



Section 4: Dakini, Heruka and Other Deities

Dakini are a class of spiritually advanced, highly powerful female deities. In Tantric Buddhism, dakini can function variously as protectors, benefactors and meditational deities. They are associated with dynamic energy and are often invoked by believers to assist with spiritual development and transformation. Dakini may be worshipped individually or in combination with other deities. Their natures may be peaceful or wrathful, and some dakini can manifest themselves in multiple forms.

Heruka are a class of wrathful, male meditational deities. Some dharmapala—including Vajrabhairava and Hayagriva—can also be classed as heruka when they are functioning as meditational deities. Different schools of Tantric Buddhism define the heruka class differently and emphasize different deities within it. The Gelug School, for instance, particularly reveres the deities Chakrasamvara and Kalachakra, while the Nyingma School venerates a group of deities known collectively as the Eight Pronouncements Herukas.

The Tantric Buddhist pantheon is extremely complex and includes a large number of minor deities that are invoked by devotees to protect them from illness and injury, to bring them wealth, to grant them numerous children, and to help them manage their herds of animals. These minor deities generally have less spiritual significance than the major deities and are embraced by their followers mainly for the material benefits they can provide.



Tantric Simhavaktra

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 8.2 x 7 cm.

Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.357



Tantric Simhavaktra

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 12.1 x 9.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.360

Simhavaktra is considered by some to be the queen of the dakini. She has the head of a white snow lion and the body of a human woman. As here, she is typically portrayed in a dancing pose holding a ritual flaying knife, a skull cup filled with blood, and a skull-tipped tantric staff. She wears a five-skull crown and bone jewelry together with an elephant-skin cloak and a tiger-skin skirt. She is accompanied by her two attendants, the tiger-headed Vyaghravaktra and the bear-headed Rikshavaktra. In Mongolia, Simhavaktra was traditionally favored by the Nyingma School and was invoked especially for protection against witchcraft and necromancy. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 686-691; Meinert (2011), pp. 562-571; Kreijger (2001), pp. 118-119.



Dancing Dakini
Mongolian, 20th century. Ink on paper. 29.2 x 21.6 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.11.1

The specific identity of this dancing dakini is unclear. Her voluptuous body is richly adorned with fine silk clothing and gold jewelry. Standing on one leg, she holds a hook in her right hand, and a skull cup containing a vase of immortality and a cluster of wish-granting gems in her left hand.

Image at right.



Tantric Simhavaktra
Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink on paper. 29.8 x 21.6 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.13.1

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Machig Labdron and Four Directional Dakini with Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.2 x 7.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.372

Facing page.

Machig Labdron and Four Directional Dakini with Padmasambhava
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 9.5 x 8.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.346

The white figure in the center of these two paintings is the Tibetan spiritual teacher and dakini Machig Labdron (1055-1153). She is surrounded by four additional dakini, each of whom is a different color and represents a different cardinal direction: Padmadakini (red, west), Karmadakini (green, north), Vajradakini (blue, east), and Ratnadakini (yellow,south). All of the figures are portrayed in dancing poses, wearing crowns, jewelry, and sumptuous clothing. They also hold skull-form hand drums, bronze bells and tantric ritual staffs. In Mongolia, this group of five dakini was traditionally invoked in rituals on the first day of the Lunar New Year to bring good luck for the coming year. Both paintings are inscribed on their reverse sides with five-syllable consecration mantras. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 696-703; Meinert (2011), pp. 178-181; Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 155-156



Vajrayogini Drinking Blood

Mongolian, 20th century. Pigments on sized cloth. 22.9 x 18.4 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.2

Vajrayogini is a powerful female tantric buddha and dakini who functions as a meditational deity in the Highest Yoga Tantra. She can appear in multiple forms. The form depicted here was first described by the 11th-century Indian sage Naropa to whom she transmitted a body of secret teachings, so in this form she is sometimes also called Naro Dakini. As here, Vajrayogini is usually portrayed standing in a lunging pose, with her feet trampling the demons Bhairava and Kalaratri. She has long hair and red skin, and her naked body is adorned with a crown and garland made of human skulls, and jewelry made of human bones. She holds a ritual knife in her right hand, a skull cup filled with blood in her left hand, and she has a tantric ritual staff balanced across her left shoulder. When she tips the skull cup to her mouth, the blood is transformed into a sweet elixir conferring enlightened bliss. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 674-681; Meinert (2011), pp. 419-427; Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 386-391; Mullin and Watt (2003), pp. 154-155.



Vajrayogini Drinking Blood
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case inset with turquoise and coral. 10.2 x 7.6 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.373





Vajrayogini Drinking Blood
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 10 x 10.1 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.391





Hemanta Rajni Riding a Camel
Mongolian, 18th century. Gilt bronze, pigments. 29.2 x 34.3 x 11.4 cm.
Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Hemanta Rajni is the Queen of Winter. She often appears in the retinue of the dharmapala Magzor Gyalmo, but is also revered as a deity in her own right. Because she rides a camel, Hemanta Rajni is considered by Mongolians to be the patron saint of camel herders. Before the introduction of motor vehicles, camels played an important role in transporting people and goods across the vast Mongolian steppes.
References: Fleming (2011), pp. 916-919; Meinert (2011), pp. 552-555.



Hemanta Rajni and Magzor Gyalmo
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; bronze case. 12.7 x 22.8 cm.
Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Both images.



Chakrasamvara with His Consort

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, tin and glass case. 11.4 x 9.5 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.335

Chakrasamvara is an important meditational deity of the heruka class who is invoked in rituals associated with the Highest Yoga Tantra. He can appear in several different forms. This blue-skinned form has one head, four faces, twelve arms and two legs. Each face has three eyes and wears a fierce expression. His body is clothed with an elephant-skin cloak and a tiger-skin loin cloth. His twelve hands hold a variety of tantric weapons and ritual implements that he uses to destroy obstacles and illusions. His feet trample the demons Bhairava and Kalaratri. He stands in yab-yum embrace with his consort Vajravarahi, whose hands hold a ritual knife and a skull cup filled with blood. For Gelug practitioners in particular, Chakrasamvara and his consort symbolize the perfect union of method and wisdom. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 492-495; Meinert (2011), pp. 408-411; Kreijger (2001), pp. 114-115.



Kalachakra with His Consort

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper, silver and glass case. 9.8 x 7.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.397

Kalachakra is a meditational deity of the heruka class who is invoked in rituals of the Kalachakra Tantra. He is portrayed here with one head, four faces, two legs and twenty-four arms. His multi-colored skin is blue, white or red on different parts of his body. Each face has three eyes and wears a fierce expression. His body is adorned with gold jewelry and a tiger-skin loin cloth. His hands hold a variety of tantric weapons and ritual implements, and his feet trample the demons Kamadeva and Rudra. The gold-skinned figure he is embracing is his consort, Vishvamata, who has one head, two legs and six arms. The Kalachakra Tantra helps adherents understand the bliss of emptiness, where time does not exist and the mind can transcend the twin traps of suffering and desire. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 502-505; Meinert (2011), pp. 352-357; Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 480-489.



Guru Dragpur

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 11.7 x 9.8 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.390

Guru Dragpur is a meditational deity of the heruka class who is venerated mainly by the Nyingma and Sakya schools of Vajrayana Buddhism. A wrathful manifestation of Padmasambhava, Guru Dragpur can appear in multiple forms. The form depicted here has one head, three faces, six arms and a pointed, peg-like body that resembles the shape of a ritual knife called a *phurbu*. His right hands hold a mace, an axe and a ritual knife. His left hands hold a scorpion, a corpse and a skull cup filled with blood. The tip of his lower body impales a naked human body. Guru Dragpur was first described in the 16th century by the Tibetan master Drugchen Padma Karpo (1527-1592) as part of his Revealed Treasure Teaching. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=492. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Achala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case with enamel beads. 11.4 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.341

Although he closely resembles the bodhisattva Vajrapani, Achala is a meditational deity associated with Akshobhya Buddha and the bodhisattva Manjushri. He is typically portrayed standing in a spread-legged stance with a sword in his upraised right hand and a lasso in his left hand. He has dark blue skin and a wrathful face with three eyes and a mouth full of sharp fanged teeth. He wears an elephant-skin cloak and a tiger-skin loin cloth, together with a gold crown and gold jewelry. Achala was traditionally believed to help devotees overcome their own negative qualities, and was also invoked in rituals for help in removing obstacles and solving problems. References: Meinert (2011), pp. 448-449; Linrothe and Watt (2004), pp. 186-192.





Eight Pronouncements Heruka with Consort

Mongolian or Tibetan, 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 47 x 34.3 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

The blue-skinned heruka depicted at the center of this painting is one of the Eight Pronouncements Heruka, who traditionally functioned as important meditational deities for the Nyingma and Sakya schools in Mongolia and Tibet. He has one head, three faces, six arms, two wings and four legs. His upswept hair is encircled by crowns of skulls, and his body is adorned with an elephant-skin cloak, a tiger-skin loin cloth and jewelry made of gold and human bone. His six hands hold various tantric weapons and ritual objects including an axe, a pick, a vajra scepter, a bell and two skull cups filled with blood. He stands in yab-yum embrace with a light blue-skinned female consort who also wears a tiger-skin loin cloth and holds a skull cup filled with blood. The fierce-looking couple is surrounded by fourteen animal-headed dakini dancing on multi-colored clouds. At the top center of the painting there is an image of the blue-skinned Vajradhara Buddha sitting in yab-yum embrace with his consort. Vajradhara is flanked to the left and right by a seated buddha and a red-hat lama. Standing at the bottom center of the painting are three Nyingma protector deities: the nine-headed Rahula on the left, the one-eyed Ekajati in the middle, and the snow lion-riding Dorje Legpa on the right. Four wrathful attendants stand in yab-yum embrace with their consorts in each of the corners. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with two three-syllable consecration mantras written in a cruciform arrangement. References: Kreijger (2001), pp. 136-137; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=276. Accessed 5/13/2019.







Bhurkumkuta

Mongolian, 19th century. Bronze, copper, pigments. 21.6 x 17.1 x 6.3 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Bhurkumkuta is a meditational deity who is invoked primarily in Kriya Tantra rituals. He is thought to help heal illnesses and to rid the body and mind of defilements. As here, he is typically portrayed with one head, three faces, six arms and two legs. His faces are wrathful, and he wears skull crowns, bone jewelry and a tiger-skin loin cloth. Textual descriptions describe his skin as “smoky” in color, and indeed there are traces of a blue-gray pigment remaining on the surface of this sculpture. His hands are supposed to carry an assortment of tantric weapons and ritual implements, but those attributes are now missing from this sculpture. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 900-901; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=564. Accessed 5/13/2019.



The Five Gods of the Individual
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 13.6 x 11.1 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2016.22.8.1

The Five Gods of the Individual are protector deities that are believed to reside in the bodies of all people. They appear in Mongolian art in various configurations. This painting shows Mo Lha, the only female among the Five Gods, at the center of the group riding on the back of a gray doe, holding a golden arrow and divination mirror. Mo Lha is believed to reside under a person’s left armpit. The figure in the upper left corner is Yul Lha. He is portrayed as a warrior riding on a white horse, wearing armor, and holding a bow and arrow. He is believed to reside on the crown of a person’s head. The figure in the upper right corner is Dra Lha. He is portrayed riding a white horse, wearing fine silk clothing, and holding a spear and a lasso. He is believed to reside on a person’s right shoulder. The figure in the lower right corner is Srog Lha. He is portrayed as a warrior riding a gray horse, wearing armor, and holding a spear and lasso. He is believed to reside in a person’s heart. The figure in the lower left corner is Po Lha. He is portrayed as a youthful male figure riding on a tawny horse, wearing fine clothing, and holding vessels containing wish-granting jewels and an elixir of longevity. He is believed to reside under a person’s right armpit. The bodhisattva Vajrapani appears above the five deities, and they are surrounded by various animals of the Himalayan mountains and Mongolian steppes including a tiger, a camel, a yak, a dog, a lion, a horse, a mule and a wolf. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 872-877; Meinert (2011), pp. 666-670; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 228-229.



Mo Lha Riding a Horse
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 12.4 x 8.2 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.354

Mo Lha is the only female among the Five Gods of the Individual, and is the god most frequently depicted on her own. These two paintings portray her in her conventional form: riding on the back of a horse, wearing fine clothing, and holding an arrow and divination mirror.

Facing page.



Mo Lha Riding a Horse
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case.
8.9 x 8.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.322



White Jambhala
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 8.2 x 7.6 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.370

White Jambhala is a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. He was traditionally invoked by Mongolian Buddhist monks in rituals designed to discover the hidden teachings of earlier tantric masters. He was also embraced by both monks and lay believers as a wealth deity. He is portrayed here riding on the back of a dragon. He has a semi-wrathful appearance with a third eye on his forehead and a mouth full of sharp teeth. He wears fine clothes and holds a trident spear and jewel-tipped mace in his hands. The reverse side of this painting is inscribed with the standard five-syllable consecration mantra. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=1282. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Maharakta Ganapati
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 10.2 x 8.6 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.364

Ganapati is the Tantric Buddhist form of the Hindu god Ganesha. He can appear in multiple forms and is invoked chiefly as a wealth deity and problem solver. The red-skinned form of Ganapti depicted here has one head, two legs and twelve arms. His head is that of an elephant. His hands hold various tantric weapons that he uses to destroy obstacles, and he stands on a jewel-spitting mongoose that provides wealth to his supplicants. Maharakta Ganapati is considered to be a manifestation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and is sometimes worshipped in conjunction with the deities Kurukulla and Takkiraja. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with a five-syllable consecration mantra. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 926-927; Huntington & Bangdel (2003), pp. 494-497; Berger & Bartholomew (1995), pp,230-231.





Three Long Life Sisters
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper and glass folding case. 8.6 x 22.2 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.388

This triptych depicts three of the five so-called Long Life Sisters. These deities originated as Tibetan nature spirits, and were later brought into the Buddhist pantheon as protectors and benefactors by Padmasambhava sometime around the 8th century CE. The white-skinned figure on the left is Tseringma. She rides on a snow lion and holds a vajra scepter and longevity vase in her hands. The green-skinned figure in the center is Tekar Drozangma. She rides on a blue dragon and holds a bunch of grass and a lasso in her hands. The gold-skinned figure on the right is Miyo Lozangma. She rides a tiger and holds offerings of food in her hands. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=366. Accessed 5/13/2019.





Hariti

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 16.3 x 12.7 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.4

Buddhist legend says that Hariti began life as a female demon who killed human children to feed her own offspring. When Shakyamuni Buddha confronted her with the suffering she was causing, she changed her ways and instead became a protector of children. This painting portrays Hariti sitting on a lotus pad in a relaxed pose with her legs extended in front of her. Her body is adorned with gold jewelry and sumptuous silk clothing, and her skin radiates a golden light. In her lap she holds both an infant and a jewel-spitting mongoose. The cult of Hariti was especially popular in eastern Mongolia and parts of Northern China. The reverse side of this painting is inscribed with a three-syllable consecration mantra. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 558-560.



Marichi Riding on a Horse
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 15.6 x 14 cm. Hope College Collection, 2019.7.3

Marichi was traditionally revered in Mongolia and Tibet as Goddess of the Dawn. She was regarded as a protector and benefactor who could cure illnesses, protect travelers from harm, and provide blessings to people in need. Marichi can appear in a variety of forms. The form portrayed in this painting has one head, three faces, two arms and two legs. Her front face is that of a human, while her two side faces are those of a sow. She sits cross-legged on the back of a tawny horse, holding a child in her arms. The iconography of the image is unusual, and may reflect Marichi's specific role as a healer of sick children. Reference: Mullin and Watt (2003), pp. 118-120; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=330. Accessed 5/13/2019.

Section 5: Mahasiddhas and Lamas

Mahasiddha is a Sanskrit term meaning “Great Adept.” It refers to holy men and women who have practiced advanced tantric yoga and meditation techniques to the point that they acquire special psychic and spiritual powers (*siddhi*). Most of the mahasiddhas venerated in Mongolia originated in India and Tibet between the 7th and 14th centuries. Stories about them were first collected and passed down through the various Tibetan Vajrayana schools, and were later transmitted from Tibet to Mongolia. Although some mahasiddha stories may be rooted in actual people and events, many of the accounts were embellished over the centuries with mythical and supernatural elements. Most mahasiddhas are not worshipped in the same way as buddhas, bodhisattvas and other major deities. Rather, they are revered as teachers and recognized as spiritual exemplars whose achievements are to be admired and emulated.

Lama is a Tibetan term meaning “Venerable One.” Historically this title was given only to high-ranking clerics and teachers who were instrumental in developing the Buddhist faith and transmitting it to future generations. The teacher-pupil relationship plays an essential role in Tantric Buddhism. Senior monks instruct younger monks in the basic tenets of Buddhist doctrine, and only gradually reveal the complexities of the tantric rituals and meditation practices according to their students’ abilities. Some monks inevitably plateau at a certain level, while others may continue to advance and eventually become lamas themselves. Many high-ranking lamas—such as the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama—are believed to be the reincarnations of previous lamas whose souls are reborn in different bodies over multiple generations.

Mahasiddha Luipa
Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink and pigment on paper. 29.2 x 20.3 cm.
Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen,
2019.10.8

Legend says that Luipa was a 9th-century Sri Lankan prince who grew disgusted with his aristocratic life and moved to the Himalayas in search of spiritual enlightenment. To rid himself of pride and worldly desires, Luipa spent twelve years meditating by a river and eating only the entrails of fish given to him by local fishermen. This drawing shows Luipa sitting in a cross-legged pose with a look of intense concentration on his face as he pulls the guts out of a fish with his right hand. The rocks, clouds and water that surround Luipa give the impression that he is radiating a powerful spiritual energy. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 216-217; Huntington and Bangdel (2003), pp. 139-140.





Milarepa
Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink and pigment on paper. 29.5 x 21.6 cm.
Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen,
2019.9.4

Milarepa (ca. 1040-1123) was a Tibetan holy man who is said to have studied black magic as a young man so that he could take revenge on the wicked relatives who forced him into a life of poverty and servitude after his father died. When retaliation failed to bring him solace, Milarepa began to study Buddhism with the great master Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (1012-1097). Marpa first subjected Milarepa to years of back-breaking work to purify him of his sins. Once he was satisfied with Milarepa’s repentance, Marpa then transmitted his secret knowledge and wisdom to him. After leaving Marpa, Milarepa became a recluse and spent many years meditating in the mountains, eating only nettles and composing thousands of poems and songs. He gradually attracted his own students and eventually became a leading master of the Kagyu School. This drawing depicts Milarepa as an older ascetic, sitting in a rocky cave with one hand cupped to his ear as he chants one of his most famous poems about a hunter and a deer.
References: Fleming (2011), pp. 278-279; Rhie and Thurman (1999), pp. 312-315; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=216. Accessed 5/13/2019.

Padmasambhava

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper, bronze and glass case. 11.4 x 10.2 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.355

Padmasambhava was a quasi-legendary mahasiddha who is said to have brought Tantric Buddhism from India to Tibet in the 8th century CE. He is regarded as a manifestation of both Amitabha Buddha and Avalokiteshvara, and is revered in Tibet and Mongolia as the founder of the Nyingma School. As here, Padmasambhava is typically portrayed as an intense-looking holy man seated in a cross-legged pose on a lotus-form pad. He is dressed in the sumptuous robes of a high-ranking cleric and wears a distinctive five-pointed scholar's hat that was supposedly given to him by an Indian king. He holds a vajra scepter in his right hand, a skull cup containing a jar of ambrosia in his left hand, and has a trident-tipped ritual staff nestled in the crook of his left arm. The skull and two severed heads on his staff are said to signify his victory over desire, hatred and ignorance. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with a five-syllable consecration mantra. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 264-269; Meinert (2011), pp. 166-167; Rhie and Thurman (1999), pp. 244-245.





Padmasambhava
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 12.7 x 10.8 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.389



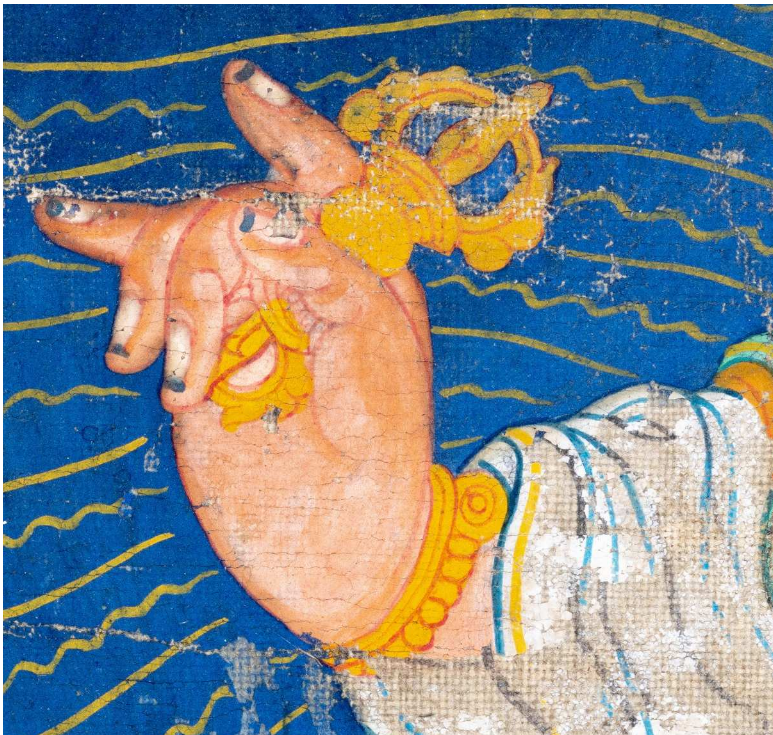
Padmasambhava
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; iron and glass case. 12.1 x 9.8 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.392





Padmasambhava Surrounded by Meditational Deities
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 53.7 x 39.3 cm. Hope College Collection, 2014.24

Padmasambhava often functions as a meditational deity in Tibetan and Mongolian Tantric Buddhism. This painting depicts Padmasambhava surrounded by a host of other meditational deities, including (moving clockwise from the top): Amitabha Buddha, Six-Syllable Avalokiteshvara, Bhaishajyaguru, Green Tara, Vajrapani, Ushnishavijaya, Seven-eyed White Tara, Manjushri, Two-eyed White Tara, Akshobhya Buddha and a younger incarnation of Padmasambhava.





Thangtong Gyalpo
Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 36.8 x 25.7 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.47.2

Thangtong Gyalpo (ca. 1385-1464) was a Tibetan monk, artist and engineer who is said to have written several Tibetan operas, and built more than 50 iron-chain suspension bridges throughout Tibet. Thangtong is also said to have possessed and transmitted a potent long-life ritual derived from Amitayus Buddha and acquired through the intercession of Padmasambhava. This painting depicts Thangtong Gyalpo as a white-bearded holy man, wearing a robe trimmed with tiger fur and sitting on a blue antelope hide. His right hand holds a length of iron chain while his left hand holds a jar containing a long-life elixir. The image of Green Tara in the upper right corner reminds us that Thangtong was a man of action. The image of Ushnishavijaya in the upper left corner reminds us that he was also a longevity sage. Reference: Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=311. Accessed 5/13/2019.



Tsongkhapa with Disciples
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, bronze and glass case. 10.2 x 9.5 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.325

Tsongkhapa Lopzang Dragpa (1357-1419) was a Tibetan monk and philosopher who founded the Gelug School. He is believed to have been an earthly manifestation of the bodhisattva Manjushri, and is greatly revered as a saint and teacher in both Tibet and Mongolia. Tsongkhapa is portrayed here sitting in a cross-legged meditation pose with his hands held in front of him making a teaching gesture. The two lotus blossoms that appear at his shoulders support a flaming sword and a wisdom sutra to signify his affiliation with Manjushri. He wears the saffron-colored robes of a monk, and his head is covered with a distinctive peaked hat that was once yellow but now looks gray because of an oxidized lead pigment in the paint. As is often the case, Tsongkhapa is shown here accompanied by his two chief disciples, Gyaltsab Je (1364-1432) on the left and Khedrup Je (1385-1438) on the right. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 296-301; Meinert (2011), pp. 190-191; Rhie and Thurman (1999), pp. 348-352.

Tsongkhapa with Disciples and Deities
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 11.4 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.344

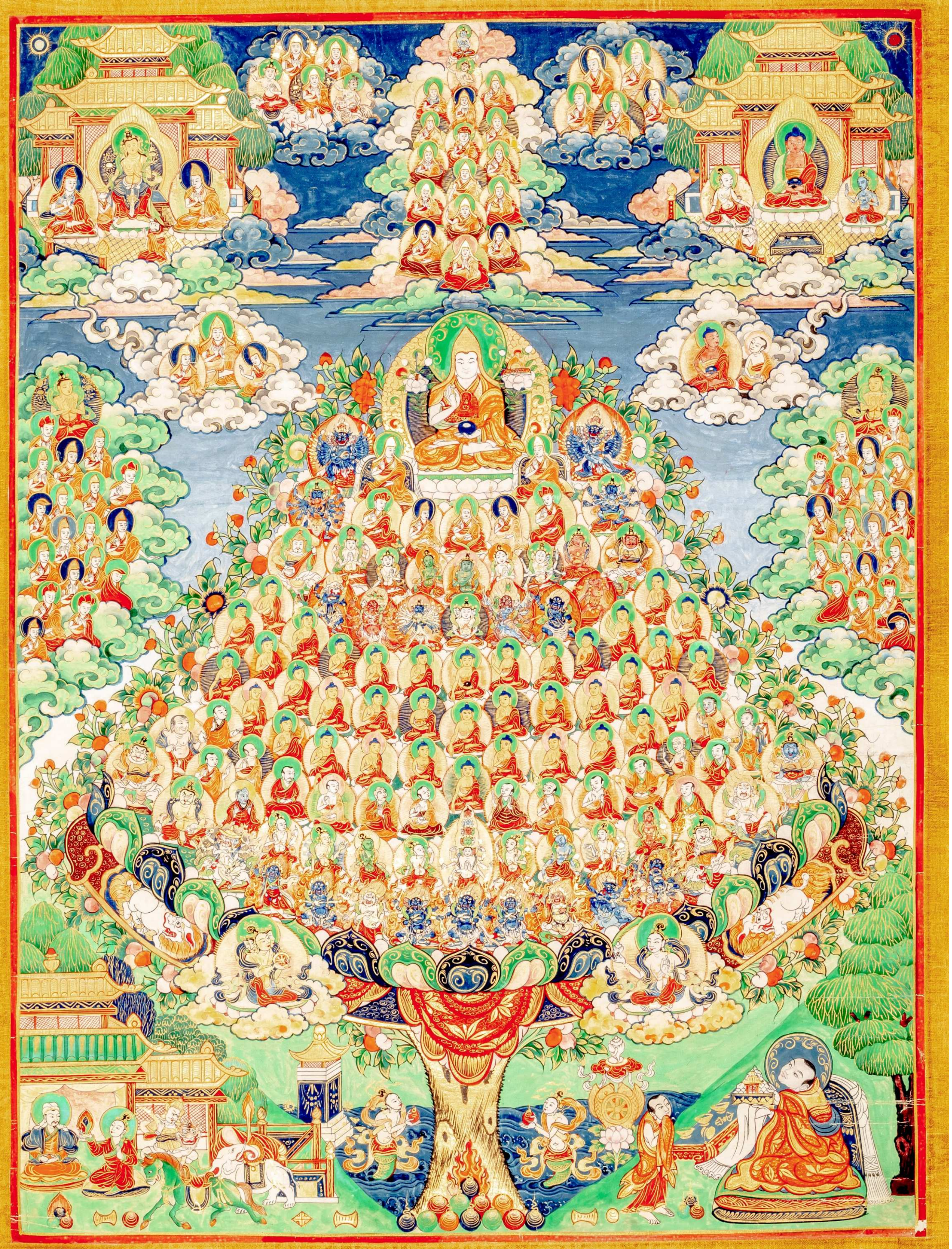
Tsongkhapa and his disciples are portrayed here with two bodhisattvas—Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara—and one dharmapala—Yama Dharmaraja—all of whom function as important meditational deities within the Gelug School. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with the five-syllable consecration mantra: *oṃ āh hūm svā hā*.



Tsongkhapa with Disciples and Deities
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; copper and glass case. 9.8 x 8.2 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.396

Tsongkhapa and his disciples sit within a triangular bank of clouds at the center of this painting, flanked by two winged apsaras. Above them to the left and right sit Shakyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Buddha in their respective heavenly palaces. The three figures on the ground below Tsongkhapa are Yama Dharmaraja, Six-Armed Mahakala and Sherab Senge, another student of Tsongkhapa who is shown here conjuring the image of his master through a visualization exercise. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with the standard five-syllable consecration mantra. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 200-201.





Tsongkhapa Refuge Field
Mongolian, 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 46 x 34.3 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.70.5

This painting offers a schematic representation of the Gelug School's spiritual universe, with Tsongkhapa at its center. The figures directly above Tsongkhapa are his spiritual predecessors going back to the blue-skinned Vajradhara Buddha who appears in a cross-legged seated pose at the very top of the painting. The crowd of figures directly below Tsongkhapa represents all the major classes of Gelug deities, including buddhas, bodhisattvas, arhats, dharmapalas, dakinis, and yidams. They are all supported on a massive lotus pedestal that resembles a tree growing from the earth with Tsongkhapa as its crown. The figures in the upper right and left corners of the painting are Amitabha Buddha and Maitreya Buddha, each sitting in their respective heavenly palaces. The groups of figures floating on clouds below Amitabha and Maitreya represent the great sages and teachers of the Gelug order, and of Vajrayana Buddhism more broadly. Finally the figures at the bottom of the painting represent the Buddhist clergy, lay believers and nature spirits. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 286-287; Meinert (2011), pp. 310-317; Kreijger (2001), pp. 82-83







Dalai Lama

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 43.2 x 35.6 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.82.1

Probably the most famous lama in Tantric Buddhism is the Dalai Lama, whose title literally means “Ocean Lama.” This title was first granted to the Tibetan Gelug patriarch Sonam Gyatso (1543-1588) by the Tümed Mongol chief Altan Khan (1507-1582) in 1577. Backed by Altan Khan’s political and military power, the Gelug order became the dominant school of Buddhism in Mongolia and Tibet, and the Dalai Lama became the supreme religious authority in both countries. Although Sonam Gyatso was the first monk to be called Dalai Lama, the title was applied retroactively to two of his previous incarnations. Therefore, Sonam Gyatso is officially known as the Third Dalai Lama. Since Sonam Gyatso’s death in 1588, the title of Dalai Lama has been passed on for eleven generations to monks who are recognized as reincarnations of their predecessors. The figure depicted in this painting is probably either the Third or the Fifth Dalai Lama. He is portrayed sitting on a textile-draped throne, wearing the robes and hat of a high-ranking Gelug cleric. His right hand is held in front of his chest making a teaching gesture, while his left hand rests in his lap holding a sutra. He is flanked by two guardian deities: Magzor Gyalmo, who is regarded as the personal protector of the Dalai Lamas, in the lower right corner; and the inner form of Yama Dharmaraja, who is regarded as a special protector of the Gelug order more broadly, in the lower left corner. Reference: Berger (1995), pp. 51-56; Fleming (2011), pp. 306-307.

The Seventh Dalai Lama

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver, copper and glass case. 14.9 x 10.8 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.398

The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kalzang Gyatso (1708-1757), was revered during his lifetime and afterward as a highly devout, morally upright cleric, scholar and poet. He restored spiritual legitimacy to the Dalai Lama position after political disputes led to two different people being recognized as the Sixth Dalai Lama. This painting portrays the Seventh Dalai Lama seated on a textile-covered, heavily-jeweled lion throne, wearing the robes and hat of his office. His right hand holds a lotus that supports a golden dharma wheel emblem. His left hand holds a wrapped sutra. A small altar table in front of his throne is set with various religious objects, including a skull-form hand drum, a bell, an alms bowl, a spouted ritual vase containing a spray of peacock feathers, and an offering jar. Reference: Fleming (2011), pp. 318-323.



Panchen Lama

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass case. 7 x 6.3 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.386

The Panchen Lama is the second highest ranking cleric in the Gelug School after the Dalai Lama. The title of Panchen Lama was first granted to Chökyi Gyaltsen (1570-1662), who served as chief tutor to the Fifth Dalai Lama. The title was then applied retroactively to three of Gyaltsen's previous incarnations, so that he became officially the Fourth Panchen Lama. This painting depicts one of the Panchen Lamas, probably either the Fourth or the Sixth. He is portrayed sitting on a textile-covered throne wearing monk's robes and a scholar's hat. His right hand is held up in a teaching gesture and his left hand holds a vase containing three symbolic jewels. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 206-207.





Zanabazar

Mongolian, early 20th century. Ink and pigments on paper. 41.9 x 29.8 cm. Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Gerri Vander Molen, 2019.13.19

Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (1635-1723) was a Khalkha Mongol prince turned monk who was recognized as the reincarnation of an important Buddhist saint by the Fifth Dalai Lama, and installed as the supreme leader of the Gelug School in Mongolia. Through his combined spiritual and political authority, Zanabazar encouraged the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia and helped it gain widespread acceptance there as a popular religion. As a young man, Zanabazar spent several years studying in Tibet, where he acquired not only religious knowledge, but also knowledge of painting, sculpture and architecture that he used to create a flourishing new artistic culture in his home country. Indeed, many of the artworks in this exhibition belong to traditions that either began with or were rejuvenated by Zanabazar in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This drawing portrays the bald-headed Zanabazar sitting on a throne, wearing a monk’s robes, and holding a vajra scepter and bell in his hands. He is accompanied by three deities: Secret Accomplishment Hayagriva in the bottom left corner, Green Tara in the bottom center, and Six-Armed Mahakala in the bottom right corner. The grid lines that overlie his face and body were added by the artist to ensure correct proportions in the drawing, and to make it easier to transfer the image when the drawing was used as a model for painting. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 404-405 and 408-415; Meinert (2011), pp. 210-211; Berger (1995), pp. 56-62.





Seated Lama
Mongolian, 19th century. Wood with traces of cold gold and pigment, copper wire. 10.2 x 5.1 x 4.4 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This figure can be identified as a high-ranking lama by his distinctive high-crowned scholar's hat and monk's garments. He sits in a cross-legged meditation pose with one hand held up in a teaching gesture and the other hand resting in his lap. Both hands also hold the stalks of lotus blossoms that appear at the lama's shoulders. The lotus on his right shoulder supports a flaming sword of wisdom, suggesting an affinity between this lama and the bodhisattva Manjusri. The pedestal on which he sits resembles a cased set of books, further reinforcing the lama's status as a scholar and teacher.

Section Six: Mandalas, Stupas and Ritual Objects

Mandalas are symbolic spiritual diagrams that are used to represent specific religious doctrines and deities in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. In Tantric Buddhist art, mandalas usually take the form of a palace or temple that is portrayed as if seen from above. The schematic structures are organized as a series of concentric circles and squares that are connected by stylized gates and doors. The spaces inside each layer of the mandala are filled with images and symbols representing different aspects of the doctrine or deity that is its primary focus. Tantric Buddhist practitioners often use mandalas in meditation and visualization exercises to help them deepen their understanding of the faith and progress toward spiritual enlightenment.

Stupas are monuments constructed to commemorate important people and events in Buddhist history. The earliest stupas were built in India and Nepal to mark the places where Shakyamuni Buddha lived and taught, and to house his relics. As Buddhism spread across Asia, the stupa form spread with it and gradually assumed a broader range of symbolic meanings. In Mongolian and Tibetan art, images of stupas are often used as aniconic representations of Shakyamuni Buddha and as symbols of different aspects of the Buddha mind.

Rituals are performed for a wide variety of reasons in Tantric Buddhism: to venerate deities, to cultivate and transmit spiritual knowledge, to seek blessings or protection from harm, to celebrate major life events, and to earn karmic merit, among others. Many different types of implements and vessels are used in the performance of these rituals. Some ritual objects—such as vajra scepters and bells—are typically owned by individual practitioners, while other objects—such as altar ornaments and certain liturgical vessels—are more often the institutional property of a temple or monastery.

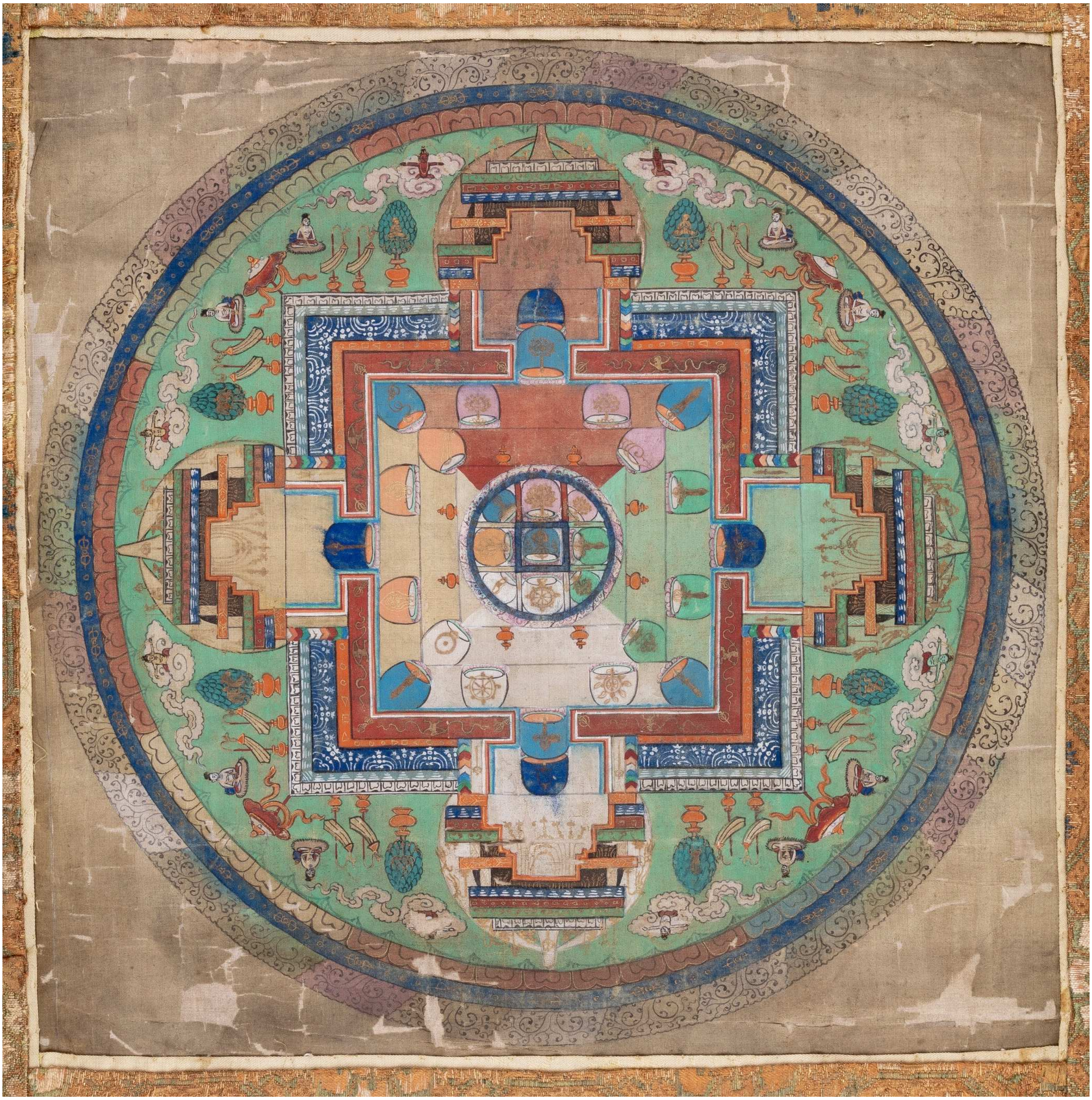




Vajrabhairava Mandala

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; wood and glass frame. 18.1 x 17.8 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.331

This mandala is dedicated to the deity Vajrabhairava, who appears at the center of its circular inner precinct standing in yab-yum embrace with his consort, Vajravetali. The divine couple are surrounded by eight additional deities from Vajrabhairava's retinue, starting directly above them with Ragavajra and continuing clockwise with Khadgavajra, Irshyavajra, Padmavajra, Mohavajra, Mudgaravajra, Pisunavajra and Dandavajra. Four skull cups filled with blood touch the central circle opposite the corners of the surrounding square precinct. The gates leading from the square precinct to the outer circular precinct are sealed with the sacred Sanskrit character *oṃ*. The outer precinct is filled with images of gold canopies and victory banners. The four rings that make up the outermost layers of the mandala contain stylized images of lotus petals, vajra scepters, multi-colored clouds and landscapes that represent the heavenly and earthly realms in which Vajrabhairava operates. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 480-481.



Mandala with Symbols of the Five Celestial Buddhas
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 31.1 x 31.7 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.403

This mandala contains symbols representing the five Celestial Buddhas. The symbol at the center of the mandala is a vajra, representing Akshobya Buddha. The symbols in the top center and top right quadrant are lotuses, representing Amitabha Buddha. The symbols in the right center and lower right quadrant are swords, representing Amoghasiddhi Buddha. The symbols in the bottom center and bottom left quadrant are dharma wheels, representing Vairochana Buddha. The symbols in the left center and upper left quadrant are flaming jewels, representing Ratnasambhava Buddha. All of the symbols are repeated within the square middle precinct, and at the gates leading to the circular outer precinct, which is filled with parasols, victory banners and dharma wheels symbolizing spiritual enlightenment. Reference: Meinert (2011), pp. 320-321.



Tantric Lotus Mandala
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass frame. 18.7 x 18.7 cm.
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.402

The lotus at the center of this mandala most likely symbolizes deities associated with the spiritual family of Amitabha Buddha. The lotus is surrounded by rings of skulls and human heads that are connected by multi-colored spokes to form a wheel, symbolizing the dharma. The four gates of the square inner precinct are shaped like stupas, and there are four victory canopies at each of the middle precinct's corners. The circular outer precinct contains images of skull cups filled with blood, gold vases with human heads and bodies impaled on spikes, and gold vases with green tree-shaped emblems bearing images of various buddhas and bodhisattvas. Seated among these elements, mahasiddhas raise their arms as if to support clouds containing angel-like apsaras. The outermost layers of the mandala contain stylized images of lotus petals, vajra symbols and multi-colored clouds, along with a band of images depicting scenes of heaven, earth and hell.

Stupa of Complete Enlightenment

Mongolian, early 20th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth. 13.3 x 10.8 cm.

Hope College Collection, 2019.2.3



Stupa of Complete Enlightenment

Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; silver and glass frame. 8.6 x 7 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.351

The Stupa of Complete Enlightenment is one of eight major symbolic stupa forms that appear in Mongolian and Tibetan art. The eight forms can be distinguished from one another by their decorative designs and by the number of levels in their stepped bases. The central niche of this stupa is inscribed with the sacred Sanskrit character *oṃ*. The reverse side of the painting is inscribed with the five-syllable consecration mantra *oṃ āh hūm svā hā*. References: Fleming (2011), pp. 954-957; Lipton (1996), pp. 45-47.





Attributes for a Tantric Deity
Mongolian, 19th century. Pigments and gold on sized cloth; steel and glass case. 12.7 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.380

This painting depicts a selection of attributes associated with an unidentified, wrathful tantric deity and his consort. The attributes include a five-skull crown and bone apron; a skull-form hand drum, bell and vajra scepter; a ritual flaying knife and skull cup filled with blood; a bumpa vase filled with peacock feathers; a tantric ritual staff, lotus blossom and sword; a tiger skin loin cloth and various pieces of jewelry; and two lotus-form bases, one with a supine human figure. These objects constitute offerings to the deities and also function as aniconic representations of them. The reverse side of the painting has a long consecration inscription written in red ink.

Tantric Deity Offerings
Mongolian, first half of the 19th century. Pigments on sized cloth; carved wood frame. 38.1 x 60.9 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

Kangdze is the Tibetan term for paintings that depict offerings to various tantric deities. Such paintings were traditionally displayed in the chapels of Buddhist temples and monasteries, especially during the performance of rituals associated with the designated deities. As is typical for the genre, the composition of this *kangdze* painting is organized around a central image of Mount Meru, the symbolic heart of the Buddhist universe, which appears here as a tree-like form with clouds and rocks surrounding a temple-like building that probably represents the earthly realm. Another tower-like structure in the clouds above Mount Meru probably represents the heavenly realm. The groups of humans, demons and animals arranged to either side of the central images represent worshippers and offerings to the designated deities, who do not actually appear in the image. A garland of skulls, severed heads and crows at the top of the painting adds a note of macabre festivity to the scene. Reference: Berger and Bartholomew (1995), pp. 240-242; Himalayan Art Resources. https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setid=4490. Accessed 5/13/2019.

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Shrine Cabinet

Mongolian, late 19th-20th century. Wood, lacquer, pigments, iron fittings. 78.7 x 63.5 x 50.8 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2019.6.1

The form of this cabinet resembles a Buddhist temple. Its shape suggests that the cabinet was intended to function as a household shrine, in which case it would have contained small paintings, sculptures, offering dishes and other ritual objects used by an individual or family in their private devotions.



Altar Ornament with Tantric Deity

Mongolian or Sino-Tibetan, late 19th-20th century. Repoussé copper, stones. 38.1 x 21.6 x 14 cm.
Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This jewel-shaped ornament may originally have belonged to a larger set of ritual objects that was used on the altar of a Mongolian or Tibetan Buddhist temple. Similarly shaped ornaments have been preserved in sets of altar furnishings that also include offering dishes and incense burners. The central image on the ornament is a wrathful deity with ten arms, the hands of which hold an array of tantric weapons and symbols. The central deity is flanked above and below by four guardian figures. There is a repoussé Kalachakra symbol at the top of the ornament and an engraved *oṃ* symbol on its reverse side. Reference: Lipton (1996), pp. 231-232.



Vajra Scepter and Bell
Tibetan, 20th century. Bronze. 11.4 x 3.2 x 3.2 cm and 15.9 x 8.2 x 8.2 cm.
Promised gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

The vajra scepter (also called a dorje) and bell are among the most important implements used in Tantric Buddhist rituals. The vajra scepter symbolizes the eternal, unchangeable nature of the Buddha’s mind. It represents compassion and the male principle in Tantric Buddhism. The bell symbolizes the absolute purity of the Buddha’s body and speech. It represents wisdom and the female principle in Tantric Buddhism. The vajra scepter and bell are used together in different ways depending on the rituals being performed. Typically the vajra is held in the right hand while the bell is held in the left hand when they are used in a ritual context.
References: Meinert (2011), pp. 738-740; Lipton (1996), pp. 211-214; Berger and Bartholomew (1995), p. 258.







Ritual Drum
Mongolian, 20th century. Wood, leather, silk. 8.6 x 15.2 cm.
Hope College Collection, 2019.37.1

Small hand-held drums are used by Mongolian Buddhist monks to generate spiritual energy and induce trance-like states when praying. The drums are usually held in the right hand and twisted back and forth to swing the beaters in a rhythmic tempo. Most drums are made of wood and leather, but in the past some drums used in special tantric rituals were made with human skulls and human skin. Such skull drums often appear as attributes in the hands of wrathful tantric deities.







Bumpa
Mongolian, late 19th-early 20th century.
Copper. 13.3 x 11.4 x 8.2 cm.
Hope College Collection, 2019.28

Bumpa are spouted vessels that are used in tantric empowerment and purification rituals. They also function as altar ornaments and symbols of high status. Bumpa are frequently displayed with sprays of peacock feathers extending from their tops. Images of bumpa containing peacock feathers can be seen in this exhibition in the painting depicting the attributes of a tantric deity, and in the portrait drawing of Zanabazar. Reference: Lipton (1996), pp. 233-234.

Altar Jar

Mongolian, 19th century. Metal alloy. 14.6 x 12.1 x 12.1 cm. Hope College Collection, 2017.33a-b

Small lotus-form jars like this were used on Mongolian Buddhist temple altars to make offerings of rice and other substances. They also appear in symbolic displays of ritual objects used by high-ranking lamas. A similar jar is depicted on a table in the portrait of the Seventh Dalai Lama that is included in this exhibition.



Pair of Ritual Ewers

Mongolian, 19th-early 20th century. Metal alloy, coral, turquoise. 27.3 x 12.7 x 9.5 cm each.

Hope College Collection, 2016.33..5.1a-g, 2a-g

The forms of these ritual ewers derive from an ancient Indian vessel type called a *kundika*. *Kundika* ewers were traditionally used by Buddhists across Asia in various kinds of purification rituals. The ewers also functioned symbolically as altar ornaments to represent the concepts of purity and transcendence.



Octagonal Box with Buddhist Symbols and Mantra
Mongolian , 18th-19th century. Burlwood, bronze, turquoise, lapis lazuli, coral. 35.6 x 34.9 x 8.9 cm. Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.316

This box may have been made for presentation to a high-ranking Mongolian Buddhist lama. The interior of the box is divided into small trays that could have contained offerings of nuts, candied fruits, hard cheeses and other tasty foods. The exterior sides of the box are decorated with eight auspicious Buddhist symbols: a conch shell, a parasol, a treasure vase, a dharma wheel, a victory banner, a lotus blossom, a pair of fish and an endless knot. The top of the box is decorated with a stylized lotus blossom and a mantra, or sacred incantation, written in Tibetan lantsa script. The materials and decoration of this box resemble those found on a pair of Mongolian covered jars in the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan art that were used in annual prosperity rituals. It is possible that this box, too, could have been used in prosperity rituals. Reference: Lipton (1996), pp. 183-184.



Tea Bowl with Vajra Symbols
Mongolian, 19th century. Burl wood, silver. 5.1 x 12.7 cm. Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

This tea bowl—with images of vajra scepters engraved on its foot rim—was probably made for a high-status Mongolian Buddhist monk. Most Mongolian monks consumed tea as a regular part of their diet. Mongolian tea was traditionally prepared by boiling the tea leaves with water, milk, salt and toasted barley to create a nutritious beverage that helped sustain the monks through their daily routines of prayer, ritual and work. It was also customary for lay practitioners and lower-ranking clerics to make offerings of tea when they visited a senior monk or lama.



Image shows bowl at actual size.

Covered Tea Bowl with Chinese Zodiac Symbols

Mongolian, 19th century. Burl wood, silver, turquoise, coral. 11.4 x 15.2 cm.

Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton



Image shows bowl at larger than actual size.





Monk’s Cap Ewer
Mongolian, 19th century. Copper and brass. 28.6 x 26 x 16.5 cm.
Loan from the collection of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton

The form of this ewer is said to have been inspired by the shape of a Tibetan monk’s cap. Monk’s cap ewers first appeared in China during the 14th century and spread from there to Mongolia and Tibet. This ewer is made from hammered sheet copper. It is decorated with applied brass plaques that contain images of dragons, deities, lotuses and other Buddhist symbols.



Exhibition display of shrine cabinet.
Shrine Cabinet, see entry p.189.





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Altar Ornament with Tantric Deity, see entry p. 190.







